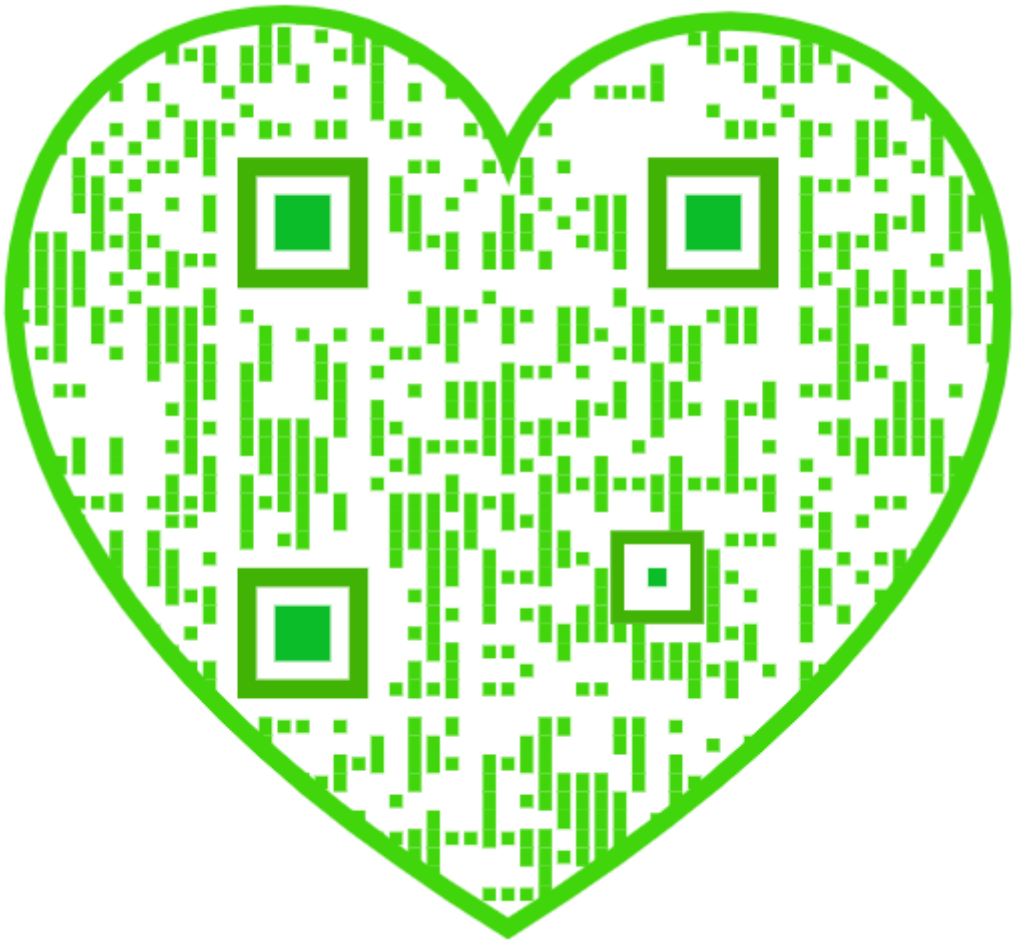

THE PRINCIPLES OF JOURNALISM

BY

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PREFACE

In this book the writer has attempted to formulate and define the fundamental principles of journalism. The work is the result of a conviction that there is a growing need for such a statement and definition. Journalism has taken its place among the great professions. Its influence is universally recognized. It has become a necessity of modern life and modern progress. Its development is one of the wonders of our age. It pervades all civilization and makes a constant impress upon human thought and achievement everywhere. Yet it is in fact so new that it is only now beginning to realize within itself that it is not a mere aggregation of individuals pursuing a common vocation, but an entity, whose rights must be guarded, whose integrity must be maintained, and whose responsibilities must be recognized, by its individual parts. This realization naturally leads to a larger consideration of journalism as a whole, to thought about it as a profession, having collective interest and duties, distinguished from journalism as an individual calling, and out of this comes an increasing endeavor to arrive at a common understanding of what journalism really is, what are the standards by which it should be governed, what are its obligations in relation to the public, what are its aims and ideals.

It is the hope of the writer that this book may contribute in some degree to such an understanding. For it would seem to be essential that a foundation be laid in an agreement upon elemental principles definitely stated, something concrete upon which conscientious journalism

—and most of its practitioners are conscientious—can plant its feet. In this effort to state the primary principles of journalism the author realizes that he presents nothing that is new to thoughtful and experienced newspaper men. Novelty, indeed, would be foreign to the purpose. Anything new would be mere theory. Principles, being necessarily the product of experience, cannot be new. But the consciousness of underlying principles, and the degree and manner of their application, whether conscious or unconscious, vary with individual character, and if standards are to be established by which good journalism may be measured, it is necessary to draw from the common experience the essential elements of conduct and practice that have been proven by time and that are in accord with those principles of right that are recognized in all human association, and give concrete form to them. No one man may accomplish this to the satisfaction of all, but one man may assemble, from his own mature experience, and his conception of the general experience, sufficient material to make a start on such a foundation, and if this work will help in any manner to that construction its main purpose will be served.

But it is the hope of the writer that the interest in this effort will not be confined to his profession. There is no human agency that is in such constant, intimate and persistent contact with the public as that of journalism. Its influence, whether profound or superficial, whether good or bad, is universal, pervading every avenue of life. Its conduct, therefore, is a matter of public concern, and what journalism thinks of itself, the standards by which it guides itself and by which it wishes to be judged, its conception of its responsibilities to the public, its aims and ideals, should all be matters of general interest. There is need for a better public understanding of the difficulties

that journalism encounters, and must of necessity encounter to a degree, in the exercise of its function and the realization of its ideals. There is a need for a better understanding of the principles which direct its best expression, a better understanding of its aspirations, and a better understanding of the devotion to the public service that is shown by tens of thousands of journalists who live and die unknown. It is the earnest wish of the writer that this book may be helpful to such an understanding.

C. S. Y.

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THE PRINCIPLES OF JOURNALISM

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGINS

THE archeologists, who dig farther and farther into antiquity, have never found that human nature in the remotest ages was different from that of to-day. The men and women of ten thousand years ago had the same interests, the same desires, the same passions, the same vices and virtues, they were moved by the same instincts and much the same reasonings, as the men and women of the present. It is therefore safe to assume that when Cain left home to acquire a residence and a wife in the land of Nod he did not wholly forget those he left behind in the neighborhood of Eden, and that when, in years long after, a patriarchal century perhaps, he met a traveler from that region, he was eager for news from home, although, for obvious reasons, he may have concealed his identity. Doubtless he wanted to know not only what had happened in the country about Eden but what was happening at the moment, and he absorbed with relish the smallest details of information, as well as those of larger importance.

The passion for news is not a development of civilization. Man is provided with organs of speech for the purpose of communication, with organs of hearing for the receipt of communications, and both tongue and ears have always been eager to function. Man is also endowed with unfailing curiosity which creates a continuous interest in the affairs, the conduct and the acts of others, a continuous interest in the processes and events of nature, a continuous interest in events and circumstances of every character, whether near or far removed. There never has been a time when men, and women, did not want to know what was going on in the family, in the community, in the region, in the world. There never was a time when the bearer of good news, or the bearer of bad news, about others, was unwelcome; never a time when news was not a commodity of constant exchange. "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country," says the author of Proverbs, bearing eloquent testimony to the value put upon news so long ago as the days of Solomon, and no modern bulletins are more eagerly read than were those beacons that heralded to Greece the fall of Troy.

This interest in events, this curiosity about things, which is the source of passion for news, is, indeed, the foundation of civilization and human progress. It is this which constantly enlarges the bounds of human knowledge and spurs that knowledge into new activities in new fields. It was the news that Paul spread through the Mediterranean provinces that established Christianity. It was the news that Marco Polo brought

back from Cathay that started a search for a water route to the East Indies. It was the news of the discovery by Columbus that prompted the voyages which opened the Western Hemisphere to settlement. The news of every discovery by science has inspired science to new researches and new discoveries. But there would have been no such results if there had not been the ever-receptive soil of human interest to receive their reports and to spread them in ever-widening circles. All knowledge, and all advancements growing out of knowledge, come from man's insatiable curiosity, his desire to know about things, whether it is the conduct of his neighbors, the nature of distant countries, or the reason of an apple's fall to the ground. He who learns tells, for the disposition to communicate is as strong as the disposition to hear. So news is disseminated, and always the process has been in operation, adding knowledge, good, bad, and indifferent, indiscriminately, to the human store, to be sifted through human experience for the rejection of the worthless.

News! The word, like the thing it names, has its roots in the remotest antiquity of language. The theory, widely circulated, that it was derived from the points of the compass (N.E.W.S.) is a fantastic notion without respectable foundation in fact or in usage. It comes from the word "new," through one of those curious developments of etymology which were common in the days when the language was in its formative stages, when there was no English grammar, and when "it appeared as if any word whatever might be used in any grammatical relation where it conveyed the idea of

the speaker." "New" is one of the oldest words in the language, one of the number that are traced directly to the Sanscrit, and it is to be found in related form in nearly every European tongue, living or dead. The *nava* of the Sanscrit became the *novus* of the Latin, the *niujis* of the Gothic, the *niwi* of the old Saxon, the *niwe* or *neowe* of the Anglo-Saxon. It was not only an adjective, but when shorn of its inflections in the transitions of the Middle English period the same word became an adverb, with the same meaning as newly; a verb, equivalent to renew; and a noun, applicable to anything new. In its plural form, "news," it is found as such a noun in the older English writings. For example, in More's *Utopia,* in the original, appeared the phrase, "not for a vain and curious desire to see news," meaning new things. When it began to be applied to new events in the modern sense of news is not definitely known. The earliest use of the word in that sense in extant writings, according to the New English Dictionary, was in 1423, when James I of Scotland wrote in the "Kingis Quare," "I bring the newis that blissful ben." The same unimpeachable authority says it did not come into common use until after 1500, when it began gradually to supersede the older "tidings," a word of Norse descent, in popular favor. This is clearly shown in the fact that while in the "authorized version" of the Bible, drawn largely from the sixteenth century texts of Tyndale and Coverdale, the word "tidings" appears twenty-five times and "news" but once, Shakespeare uses "news" thirty-eight times and "tidings" only nine. That is why it was as "tidings," rather than

as "news," that the greatest news in the world's history was announced, according to St. Luke, by the angels in "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." The word "news" took the various forms of *neues, niewse, nues, newys, newis, newes* before it was finally fixed as "news."

Recurring to the imaginary meeting of Cain and the traveler from Eden we may presume that when they exchanged the news they possessed they fell to discussing the events reported, each expressing individual opinions about them. This, it is needless to say, is a universal accompaniment of news. And it is one of its most valuable attributes that, whether it is important or trivial, it arouses discussion. Discussion promotes thought, and thought is the lever that, when placed upon the fulcrum of truth, raises humanity. News is ever food for thought, and without it the mind must starve unless it holds within itself material for contemplation, and even that is likely to grow stale and lacking in substance for the mind unless refreshed by contact with events. Two persons living in complete isolation, without any communication with the world about them, will soon, as a rule, grow silent through sheer lack of new subjects for conversation. Life demands something to talk about, something to think about, something, however small, to exercise the mind upon, and news through all ages has supplied this material for conversation, for discussion, for thought, for opinion.

News and views! Ever they have been inextricably associated, and ever they must continue to be. The

publication of news and views is journalism, a profession, an art and a business, developed out of the irrepressible instincts of human nature, responding to a universal and insistent desire for information, a universal and insistent curiosity that seeks enlightenment, a universal and insistent demand for the stimulation and satisfaction of interest. But journalism could not come into existence until facilities of publication had been created. For ages, before the syllabic and alphabetic stage of writing, the only means of publication, the only means of disseminating news, was by word of mouth, save, on occasion, by signals from hill-tops, or by understood symbols carried by messengers which reached their highest form in pictographs. For ages after the invention of letters the voice was still the only means of communication except for official messages and for the favored few who could use the tablets of clay or wax, the parchment or papyrus scripts. Yet news of great importance or particular interest had wings even under those restricted conditions. Systems of runners were developed in many countries for the rapid transmission of intelligence, and spoken or written proclamations in the market places contributed to the spread of information that authority desired to communicate, developing faint promises of the newspaper in the Acta Diurna of Imperial Rome and the so-called "gazette" of Pekin. It was not, however, until the invention of printing that the means of publication in the modern sense was created, and it was still more than a hundred years after the presses began to work before anybody seems to have thought of them as an

aid in the dissemination of news. Then, in Germany, some one conceived the idea of collecting accounts of certain important events of the time and printing them in a book. The publication received popular approval, and soon "news books" of this character began to issue from the capitals of England and France. Each one of these, however, was an individual venture like any other book. It was still a long time before a periodical news publication was thought of by a German, Egenolph Emmel, who in 1615 started the Frankfort *Journal,* and became the father of journalism, though that title is sometimes also given to Butter of London and Renaudot of Paris, who began periodical publication of newspapers some years later. It was in Frankfort, however, that journalism was founded, to lead a precarious and unrespected existence for another century before its value began to be recognized, and still another before the invention and establishment of the telegraph, the growth of transportation facilities, and the development of printing machinery, supplied the means for the extensive and rapid collection of news from everywhere, for rapid printing at low cost, and for quick and far distribution, and ushered in the era of journalism as an omnipresent and respected influence in the life and affairs of man.

There is no influence in the world so ubiquitous, so persuasive, so persistent as the newspaper. Each day it goes into the home, into the office, into the shop, into the factory, into the fields. No man is so poor or so remote that it does not touch him. And each day it lays before its reader the news of the community, of

the country, of the whole earth, news that is good, news that is bad, news that is important, news that is relatively if not wholly trivial, news that is essential to the conduct of business, of industry, of society, and of government, news that has no value save in the momentary entertainment it affords. It presents a continuous, never-ending moving picture of the world and its occurrences, of mankind and its conduct, depicting comedy, tragedy, vice, virtue, heroism, devotion, enterprise, discovery, calamity, beneficence, sorrow and joy —human life in all its kaleidoscopic and inexplicable changes. And accompanying all this is editorial comment upon the news, interpreting the meaning of events, associating views with information, opinions with fact, and thereby aiding the reader to a better understanding and to an opinion of his own which becomes an element in the creation of public opinion, that "sovereign mistress of effects" which rules the modern world. Such is journalism, a profession that exists upon the events of the day, that mirrors all life and presents it to the view of every individual, thereby bringing all mankind to a closer unity and to a clearer conception of its kinship.

CHAPTER II

PRINCIPLES OF PRODUCTION

THE newspaper is one of the most complex, as it is one of the most important and valuable, of human institutions. Its production requires primarily the extensive and intensive study and labor of a profession which may be classed among the learned, in that it is a vocation of the mind which demands an accumulated store of general and special knowledge for its successful practice. But it is also a manufacturing enterprise to which a score of skilled crafts are essential, and a business which involves extensive buying and complicated salesmanship. The business is indispensable to the profession, and the profession is indispensable to the business, and their association is most effective when each recognizes that the other is equally necessary, and that the work of journalism is not complete without the labors of both. A newspaper without competent business management fails, just as surely as one without competent editorial management. Superexcellence in neither can compensate for inadequacy in the other. And yet the two functions, though both creative, both contributing to the same end, are distinct and different and must operate separately, but in contact, within the same body.

The production of a newspaper is fundamentally a manufacturing enterprise in which the direct sale of

the product is essential. It matters not how disinterested, how altruistic, the motives inspiring the publication, the process of manufacture and sale is as necessary to their accomplishment as if its purposes were purely mercenary. For a newspaper to be of value in any way it must have readers, and it must have continuous readers. To obtain and retain such readers it must have elements of attractiveness and worth that justify payment for it, and continuous payment. A newspaper that is given away can acquire neither dependable circulation nor respect. The experiment has been tried. It must be sold, if it is to have any standing or influence, and it must be bought for its intrinsic value. It must be a marketable product. To be a marketable product it must contain what the people, or a number of them, are willing to pay for.

The first essential of a newspaper is that it be salable. The first essential of journalism is that it produce a salable commodity. It may create something of the highest character, it may express the loftiest ideals, it may be devoted to the noblest of causes, but if the product is not salable it is utterly futile. For a newspaper that is not read is no better than a blank sheet, though it contain letters of gold. And a newspaper is never salable unless it furnishes enough of what people desire to induce them to buy. It may in addition, and should, contain much for which they have no desire but which they need and which they ought to have, but it is only through that which they want that purchase can be persuaded. There is a difference between "giving the people what they want" and giving them what

they ought not to have, that will be discussed later. The point here to be impressed is the principle that a newspaper must be, first of all, a salable product, and that to be salable it must, to a certain extent, respond to a public desire. No sale, no reader; no reader, no effect. This is the formula of failure in journalistic enterprise, however high its motives.

And while it is to be qualified in some degree, it is none the less true that the influence of a newspaper is, generally speaking, in proportion to the number of its readers. Circulation is not a reliable basis for estimating the comparative influence of different newspapers, for one of large circulation may have less influence than one of smaller circulation, because of differences in the character of the publications or the character of their readers. But in every case, whether the circulation is relatively large or small, the influence of each individual publication increases with the increase of its circulation. There are newspapers that are designed to appeal only to a class distinguished by education, intelligence and culture. Their circulation then is practically limited to that class, which in relation to the whole population of any given region, is comparatively small. But this class as a rule has an influence, in society, in business and in public affairs, quite out of proportion to its numbers, and so the journal which it reads has a similar influence of a larger nature. But even within this class it still remains true that the larger the number of its readers the more extensive is the impression made by such a journal.

However fine in itself, a newspaper is worthless un-

less it has readers, and it cannot obtain readers unless it persuades buyers through the character of its contents, and through selling activities. A miller produces a commodity of universal necessity and of unquestionable value, a commodity for which there is a continuous and large demand, but it appeases no hunger, sustains no life, until it goes out from the mill and into service by distribution through sale. But neither value nor demand will effect sale of itself to an extent that will repay the labor of production. A miller who does not establish means for the sale of his flour and actively endeavor to promote sale is practically certain to cease production. Yet no one can say that flour is not wholesome, nor necessary to life. But it is only through consumption that it contributes to life; it cannot be consumed until it is distributed, and it cannot be distributed, as a permanent process, save by sale. It can be given away in emergency, but the fact remains that it is not, and never has been, given away, except as a public or private philanthropy in time of need, and even then the miller is usually compensated—he sells his product just the same. There is no product so essential to life as flour, and perhaps none so free from criticism, yet its production is everywhere and at all times a business enterprise, and for many practical reasons it must be so.

The newspaper is a manufactured product that is not essential to life. Existence is possible without it. Many do exist without it, and for ages all people lived with no newspaper to aid them. But it responds to a need and a desire of human nature, and it has become a

necessary agency of public welfare and of private information. No less than flour its production and distribution is fundamentally a business enterprise. That does not mean that profit is an essential object. It may have such altruistic or ulterior support that profit indeed is a negligible consideration. But none the less it is a business enterprise, that must be conducted on business principles and with business ability and energy if it is to accomplish whatever purpose it may have. It has to be manufactured and it has to be sold, and the training, talents and processes of business are as essential to these operations as they are to the conduct of any other business.

Moreover, it is generally true that there is a direct relation between the public influence, and usually the public value, of a newspaper and the capacity of its business management. It is usually true that the most influential papers are those that are the most prosperous, those, indeed, whose publication is most profitable in a legitimate way. That influence may not always be wholly good, but good or bad, it is based upon the number and character of its readers, upon the quantity and quality of its circulation; and it is through sales that that circulation is acquired, it is through that circulation that value is given to its advertising space, and it is through its advertising growing out of paper sales that a newspaper draws its prosperity. Sales and advertising are the products of business ability and activity, and these qualities can neither be ignored nor depreciated in the consideration of journalism, to the success of which, whatever the nature of its primary

purposes, they are essential. Incidentally, it should be realized and recognized that advertising in itself has æsthetic and economic public values that make it something vastly more important than a mere income-producing feature of journalism.

But while business ability, business principles and business methods are essential to effective journalism, it cannot be wholly dominated by the desire for profit without injury or disaster. Journalistic production is not simply a business enterprise. As a rule, every journal is established mainly to advocate certain principles, to support a certain cause, to perform a public service or supply a public need. These purposes, all of them, some of them, or at least one of them, are the impelling motives, whatever their merit, of all or practically all beginnings in journalistic production; and while the identity of such motives or the form of their application may change with time and experience, the nature of them—the basic principles of public impression or public service for public advancement—can not be altered or abandoned without peril to the enterprise. Rarely, if ever, is a newspaper or other journal established with the idea of profit foremost, and while profit may come, often does come, under competent business management, and it is highly advantageous if it does come, it will almost certainly disappear if it is permitted to become the dominant motive of production and overrides the basic principle of journalistic purpose.

For of all human undertakings a newspaper is most dependent upon sustained public confidence for its existence. And of all human productions the newspaper

is most open to public scrutiny. It is by that scrutiny, indeed, that it lives, and it is through the results of that scrutiny that it grows or withers. Each day the newspaper, in its diurnal form, is exposed naked to the world. Itself, complete, with all its faults and virtues, its weakness and its strength, it is spread before every reader, to be approved or condemned upon its open face. If it is good it shows itself, if it is bad it reveals itself. Naturally, being essentially an expression of human personalities, it is never either all good or all bad, but, whichever may predominate, it is discernible. It lays its goods upon the counter, labeled, for the reader's inspection and selection. Whatever purposes it may have, it must express them somehow on its pages or it is utterly futile. It may have ulterior motives, it may, perchance, have sinister designs that it attempts to disguise, but such a policy is invariably fatal. Actual motives cannot be long concealed nor evil designs disguised in the full glare of publicity to which it is constantly exposed. Sooner or later, every newspaper, every journal, must reveal itself for what it really is, and survive or perish on the public verdict.

Nor can a newspaper survive, much less prosper, if there is a widespread suspicion of ulterior motives based upon the nature of ownership or control. "Repeated efforts have been made by men of great wealth and having large interests to buy and conduct newspapers for the purpose of affecting public opinion," said Melville E. Stone, long general manager of the Associated Press, in a talk to newspapermen, "but in almost every instance these efforts have failed. Mr. Jay Gould once

owned a daily newspaper in New York, and after a short and inglorious career with it, was glad to sell for a greatly reduced price. Something like thirty years ago Mr. Cyrus Field bought an evening paper to protect his railway interests, and made an attempt to run it. Of course, it was not long before he discovered he could not make the thing work. He then offered to sell me a half interest with the understanding that I should pay for it out of the paper's earnings. I asked who would be associated with me, and he replied that he would keep the other half himself. I was forced to say that without any desire to be offensive I could not buy into the paper at all if he were to remain in it, even with a minority. A newspaper cannot succeed if it is to be made the means toward an ulterior end." [1]

The proof of this assertion has been repeatedly and expensively proven, and it is true because it is not possible to forward ulterior purposes through newspaper control without revealing them, and, sooner or later, revealing their source, if effort has been made to conceal that source. Newspaper ownership must be primarily concerned in publication for the legitimate and open purpose of journalism, and its control, it would seem from the general experience, must show in its creation. As a rule successful papers have been established and developed by men having no other interests and no other occupation, and most of such have continued as family properties or passed into the hands of others of like singleness of interest. Where, however, such a newspaper, no matter how prosperous or respected, has fallen

[1] *The Coming Newspaper*, p. 97.

into what may be termed alien hands, into a control that is not primarily and directly concerned in the production of a newspaper, it has slowly or swiftly declined. Acquirement of control of a newspaper, to forward private ends, by those who are not directly engaged in the work of publication, has usually if not invariably failed to accomplish the purpose. Journalism is a jealous mistress and demands the concentration of the capital involved, as well as the labors in the production, for its own sake, under penalty of disaster.

But a daily newspaper is not only exposed to the world naked every day; it must be sold upon its merits each day, and fully sold. It is the most perishable of manufactured products, perhaps the only one that is literally ephemeral. Born to-day it is dead to-morrow, its value gone. There can be no stocks on shelves or in warehouses for the newspaper. Each day it must be created anew, and each day must endeavor to sell the entire output. Each day, too, it must be created different. A newspaper must be eternally new. It must submit itself daily to the public judgment on the basis of what that day presents, plus the public confidence it has acquired through continuously and daily justifying its title to public favor. That confidence is an accumulative asset, yet no matter how long it has been developing nor how long it has been maintained, it is permanent only so long as it continues to be justified each day. It can be lost more easily and more quickly than acquired, and once lost it is more difficult to restore than to obtain in the beginning. It cannot betray that confidence without losing it, and it cannot decline in

general merit without reduction of sales. It is constantly, daily, before the bar of popular judgment, and must justify with each issue its right to public favor and esteem. If it does not it can neither grow nor stand still; it must decline. It is, therefore, ever confronted with the necessity of holding its own and of disposing each day of that day's creation, under a more searching and continuous scrutiny than is given to any other human production by its consumers.

It follows that whatever the basis of the public support given to a newspaper, whether information, opinion or entertainment predominates as its drawing power, whether it appeals to a class or to the mass, whether its quality is high or low, it must daily justify itself and its price to its particular readers. And whatever the character of its readers it must keep faith with them; it must create and maintain the impression that whatever its faults or however frequent its mistakes it is honest with them, that it is giving in a general way the service for which they pay. If it does not they will cease to buy.

It is essential that a newspaper be conducted for its own interest; it cannot prosper as the tail to any kite. It is necessary that it be conducted for its own interest, because, as has been said, the production of a newspaper requires the concentration of the capital, the brains and the energy involved upon that one purpose, if it is to be made a thing of value to its owners, to its employed creators, and to its readers, and if it is to accomplish whatever aim of legitimate journalism it desires to achieve. For such concentration is possible only where

self-interest is complete, and where self-interest may find compensation for its efforts, whether material or moral compensation, or both. But there is abundant ground for the conviction that in newspaper production self-interest and the public interest are not only compatible but identical. For the fundamental principle, as well as the fundamental aim, of journalism must be the public service, and public service in that field of endeavor is also self-service. That does not mean that a newspaper must be an eleemosynary institution, but that it must render concrete service in the supply of reliable information, in the development of intelligent opinion, in the support of public rights, in the condemnation of public wrongs, in the advancement of principles and ideals, and in the use of its power to promote and advance the public welfare generally. In so doing, if it does it well, it lays the most solid foundations for public respect, public confidence and public affection, which are not only the most satisfactory spiritual awards of journalism, but the most certain and the most durable of its material assets.

CHAPTER III

THE PRIMACY OF NEWS

THE newspaper is a response to a universal demand and need of human nature for news. It did not create that demand. On the contrary the demand has always existed, and the newspaper is its necessary and inevitable product. Therefore the primary function of a newspaper is the publication of news. News is the essential foundation of journalism. All else, even opinion, important as it is, is accessory. There are, to be sure, journals which deal only with opinion, and their production is in the field of journalism, because it is of necessity based upon news; but they are not newspapers, and they exercise but a single, and secondary, function of journalism. The primary position of news in the operation of journalism would seem to be so obvious as to need no assertion, but the fact that the principle is often obscured warrants the statement of its primacy with emphasis. Not infrequently concentration on particular policies or purposes, for which the newspaper is a means to an end, results in a relative subordination of the news. Not infrequently attachment to "features" that are not news leads to a preponderance of features at the expense of news. Occasionally it is assumed that mere entertainment is the first requisite of successful newspaper publication, and

in the application of that theory anything that is presumed to be entertaining to the readers, whether news or not, becomes of first importance, at the sacrifice of correct judgment of the relative value of news in its larger and essential sense.

The importance of legitimate purposes, over and above the mere publication of the news, is not to be disparaged. Accomplishments to which the publication of the news is but contributory indeed may be the dominating consideration. But none the less it is essential to maintain the primacy of the news, because it is the necessary foundation of all accomplishment in the field of journalism. Nor should the value of features that are outside the realm of news be denied. They may have merits in themselves that add considerably to the moral as well as the material weight of the newspaper, as a medium of information, education and entertainment. But it is only as supplementary to the news that they are of advantage. They cannot take the place of news, nor can they be permitted to overbalance the news without loss to the effectiveness of the paper.

Except as a vehicle for the dissemination of news, and, secondarily, of opinion based upon the news, the newspaper, of course, has no excuse for existence, and the life and the interest of journalism therefore centers upon the news. But what is news? It is as difficult to define with precision as is poetry, because it has no conceivable boundaries or limitations. It encompasses all humanity and all nature and partakes of their infinite variety. While in a general sense it refers to

recent events, occurrences, happenings, it is by no means confined to them. An event in itself is not news. It is the report of the event that constitutes news, and that report may not be made until years after the occurrence. It is none the less news. Hitherto unreported facts in connection with the discovery of America would be news. It is sufficient that it be fresh information. Nor is an occurrence essential. A crop report is not an account of events but of conditions. Yet it is news. Opinions are not occurrences, yet opinions are often news, and news of the greatest importance and interest. What a man thinks may be as truly news as what he does. "If the newspaper has not the news," says Charles A. Dana,[1] "it may have everything else yet it will be comparatively unsuccessful, and by news I mean everything that occurs, everything which is of human interest, and which is of sufficient importance to arrest and absorb the attention of the public or any considerable part of it."

Whatever is new in the way of information is news even though the event or the matter to which it refers be old in itself. The mythical mountaineer of Arkansas who first heard of Lee's surrender in 1896 is a fanciful illustration. It was more than thirty years after the event but it was news to him. It was weeks after the discovery of the North Pole before the world knew anything about it. The fact was old but the report was news. In the days before the telegraph, when communication depended upon slowly moving mails or personal conveyance, news was usually days, weeks or even

[1] *The Art of Newspaper Making.*

months behind the events. The development of facilities for the transmission of information that puts nearly every part of the world in practically instantaneous communication with every other part, makes it possible for news to be synchronous with events, and so large a proportion of published news relates to matters occurring the day of publication or the day before publication that the term "news" has taken to itself the sense of immediate freshness, and this immediacy becomes to some extent a test of value. News has thus come to mean almost exclusively reports of the events or conditions of the current day, reports of past events as matters of news becoming exceptional.

But, as Mr. Dana intimates, there is a distinction to be made between news *per se* and news in the journalistic sense. The individual exchanges news with almost every acquaintance he meets. Most of it, however, is of no interest save to themselves or to a small circle of their friends. It may be of great importance to them but of no importance or interest to others. News, in the interpretation of journalism, must have a certain public interest, a measure of public importance; it must be something, as Mr. Dana expresses it, that will arrest and absorb, for a moment at least, the attention of the public, or a part of it sufficiently large to justify consideration. Therefore there is always before the editor not only the question, what is news, which he answers instinctively, without any need for precise definition, even if that could be accomplished; but also the question, what is news from the standpoint of journalism, and in particular from the standpoint of his journal,

and to answer this requires the exercise of judgment as well as of instinct, involving a discrimination which must be constantly exercised.

This is a matter for later discussion, but in the consideration of the nature of news one finds not merely infinite and intricate variety, but varied stages of development, with numerous and often dramatic or tragic ramifications. The news of an event may be complete in a single report. All the facts worth presenting are at hand. They are stated, and the event is dismissed. If it has no sequel it passes into oblivion. A large proportion of news, usually of relative unimportance or interest, is of this character. Another class of news is composed of reports of occurrences that are complete in themselves, but which form a succession of events, each leading to another. The series may suddenly end, or it may develop importance progressively, an item of a few lines becoming an unsuspected herald of one that fills pages. On a day in 1914 a report went out, over the wires of the world, of the assassination of a prince in an obscure village of a petty Balkan state. In newspapers far from the scene it was given little space, as a rule. There were many events of that day that seemed more important to their editors than this remote tragedy. In itself it was, in fact, of little relative importance. If it had not been for other events to which it led it would have been forgotten in a few days; but the succeeding events, all growing out of this seemingly unimportant item, developed the greatest news that journalism has ever reported, and filled the pages of newspapers the world over for many tragic years. This,

to be sure, is an extraordinary example, but such successions of separate but related events of growing importance, starting with one apparently, or actually, small, are frequent, and the one of the World War serves well to illustrate the possibilities that lie in the chronicles of each day's occurrences.

But there is still another class of news which involves processes of a single event which may or may not arrive at completion. The news in this class records successive stages of a progressive event, in which every occurrence and all occurrences from day to day, however important in themselves, are but parts of the whole, steps of a continuing process. An election, for example, is an event which completes a long process of developing events in the course of the campaign, all contributing to a single result and never separated from the end to be reached. A political or social reform movement furnishes news of the same nature, continuous and inseparable, which progresses, or endeavors to progress, to a desired end. A session of congress produces news of a processional nature in which there are many continuing currents of events, currents which may attain completion in achievement or which may disappear in the sands, but which in the process present varied aspects and varied appeals to public interest.

Much news, therefore, and, as a rule, the more important news, is of a serial character, carrying many continued stories of fact, each report a new chapter, each incident a link in a chain. Whether long stories or short they have the attraction of continuity, of expectation, often of surprise, promoting and sustaining

interest in the degree in which they touch human emotion and concern.

Each edition of a newspaper is a new creation. And each day's creation is different from that of any other day. Each day brings new material with which to create, material of different pattern, ever varied, never quite the same, and no man can tell what the creation of one day may mean to the future. But through all run threads of continuity which bind each day to every other, making a connected narrative of that complex thing that we call human life, and daily presenting a mirror to life in which it may see itself and know itself.

News, again, may be divided into two classes, one under the head of entertainment, the other under that of information. Such a division can hardly be made absolute, for while there is much news that conveys information without entertainment, there is little news, if any, that is wholly without information. But none the less the two classes exist, governed by the predominance of the one quality or the other, and in a journal designed for general reading, as most journals are, both qualities are of necessity combined. For information without entertainment, however desirable and however valuable, is generally lacking in that attractiveness which is essential to sustained public interest and support. There are, to be sure, journals devoted exclusively to the publication of information and their value is not to be questioned, but they are usually class publications, created to supply information to certain special interests and having no attraction to

readers not concerned in the particular field so covered. If they are not class journals in the sense indicated their circulation is and must be limited to the comparatively small number of people to whom information unalloyed is the chief object of reading, and thus they also become class journals of a sort.

Human nature, prompted by that instinctive curiosity which no human being wholly lacks, wants to know "what is going on." In very large measure the response to that curiosity is entertainment rather than information. It is news that excites interest but does not edify in any material degree, if at all. It is true that the report of every event, however trivial or unimportant it may be, conveys information as to that event, but it is information that is merely a vehicle for entertainment. The average man, or woman, does not deliberately read a newspaper for instruction or for solid knowledge, but primarily for the satisfaction of curiosity as to the occurrences of the day. His eye is caught and held by that which attracts his interest, and that interest is governed by individual taste, character and association. That which is of absorbing interest to one is of no interest at all to another, but each seeks and finds that which appeals to him, and for the majority the attraction is not learning or knowledge or information in the substantial sense but entertainment.

Therefore the matter of entertainment, which should be distinguished from amusement, is one that cannot be ignored or properly depreciated in the consideration of news. Yet the newspaper would serve no constructive purpose if it confined itself to entertainment. If, as

is here asserted, the primary function of journalism is public service, then the primary duty of journalism is the publication of news that contributes to public service, through the dissemination of actual knowledge of public affairs, of public events, and the principles and motives which actuate them; and through the distribution of information of substance and value which is helpful to the individual in his daily life and in his judgment and activities as a citizen. But, in this dissemination, news whose chief interest is entertainment serves a useful purpose in drawing readers who would not be otherwise attracted to the news of real significance. Used with discrimination it is valuable as a means to an end, but it is a subordinate, not a principal.

CHAPTER IV

THE SELECTION OF NEWS

JOURNALISM deals primarily with news of public interest. It is reporter and publisher of news of events, of conditions, and of processes in the development of public opinion and action, that has somehow touched the public consciousness. It does not create news. Ordinarily it does not seek news until a measure of public attention has been drawn to an event or condition. News is created by the events themselves. Before newspapers existed every occurrence of interest became news as soon as it was known to one who could tell about it, however confidentially, and it was spread in proportion to the degree of public interest it excited. If there were no newspapers to-day, events would be reported in some way, by word of mouth from one person to another if no other form of communication existed, and each repetition would add something to the report, decreasing its reliability with the square of the distance, so to speak. Journalism, it is to be admitted, often yields to that weakness of human nature, and distorts or exaggerates news in the telling, but this is a violation, whether it is done consciously or unconsciously, of an elemental principle of journalism.

The task of journalism is to gather and disseminate news that is of public importance, or that has a suffi-

cient measure of public interest, and accuracy is the first principle of action in the performance of that task. In assuming that function of public service it also assumes a definite responsibility for the truth of that which it presents. In the exercise of discrimination in the selection and treatment of news for publication it is, therefore, essential to consider truth as the first requisite. The application of that principle is by no means as easy as its statement, and its difficulties will receive attention in a separate chapter. It is mentioned here merely to link it, as it must be linked, with the operation of editorial judgment in the choice of news to be published.

The problem always before the editor, and renewed afresh each day, is, What shall I print, and what reject? This involves much more than a judgment as to propriety or as to relative values of the various items presented on their merits. Each day he is obliged to consider limitations of space. He has so many columns available for news. The news that comes to him from his various reporting agencies usually far exceeds the space at his disposal. In consequence he is often obliged to reject much that he would print if the room at his command would permit it. And this space is an unstable quantity. It varies from day to day, and not infrequently from hour to hour, as other requirements of publication alter in their needs. And the supply of news is as variable in its volume and importance. To-day may be filled with news; to-morrow comparatively newsless. To-day may furnish a great quantity of news, none of which is of much importance; to-mor-

row may bring a rush of big news commanding many columns for its presentation. Or, again, a relatively uneventful day may proceed to near its end when news of great importance suddenly demands large space for its telling, requiring the rejection of much that is in type or that has been printed perhaps in earlier editions. There is, therefore, a continuous process of selection and rejection, of adjustment and readjustment to events and to mechanical restrictions.

Moreover, the editor never has before him at one time all the news of the day from which to pick and choose in accordance with his deliberate estimate of relative values. It is coming to him in a flowing stream, and the necessities of time and the limitations of mechanical facilities compel the exercise of his judgment upon a moving current instead of upon a static mass. He cannot see the news of the day as a whole until the printed paper comes to his desk, and then it is too late to exercise his judgment from the viewpoint of the whole.

But notwithstanding these inescapable difficulties under which editorial judgment labors there is and must be discrimination in the selection of news, and it is largely upon the quality of that discrimination that journalism depends, both for its success and for its usefulness. Where that discrimination is wise and its standards high journalism attains its loftiest elevation and contributes most to public service. But in the exercise of it there are many things to be considered.

The first principle of selection is the measure of public interest. Interest is the essential quality in the

major part of the news chosen for publication, for it is interest and interest alone that makes a newspaper attractive and therefore salable. A newspaper that is uninteresting is unsalable and the greater the public interest in the news it presents the larger its sales. Unless a newspaper is sold, it is worth while to repeat, it is not read, and if it is not read it is of no value for any purpose, howsoever elevated, that prompts its publication. The appetite of the public for news that appeals to its interest cannot be ignored. And the value of any single item of news is to be measured by the degree and extent of the interest it is likely to arouse. That is not the sole test upon which judgment should be founded, as will be shown, and it is subject to limitations, but it is the primary test.

But how is the degree of public interest in an item to be gauged or estimated in advance of publication? The "news sense" is a necessary quality in every successful newspaper man. It is an intuitive appreciation that is partly instinctive and partly the result of experience in discrimination. It is his first and surest dependence. But nevertheless there are elemental principles which he consciously recognizes and applies.

First of all, interest is measured by proximity. We, all of us, are particularly concerned in that which touches us personally, that which affects our friends or acquaintances, that which affects our neighborhood or community. In the case of a fire, for example, the persons most concerned are those who dwell in the building; next in degree of interest are those who live next door and after them those who live in the same block

or who see the fire. Those who live farther away or did not see it have still less interest, but all who live in the city where it occurs have a livelier interest in this fire, whatever its magnitude, than have those who live in a neighboring city. Interest in any event that is not national in its scope decreases with the distance from the scene of the event. The death of a President is of practically as much interest in San Francisco as in Washington. The interest in any important act of government that is of national significance is not to be measured by relative proximity. There are certain events, too, that make such an appeal to human interest everywhere that they have an equal news value everywhere. But in the ordinary run of events news value decreases with distance. It follows that local news has a peculiar importance of its own, and a certain precedence. Indeed it is largely by community interest that journalism is sustained. Without due respect for, and response to, that interest, comparatively few newspapers could exist, and many of them helpfully and profitably limit themselves to the local field, leaving to others the task of supplying general news. These others, however, cannot exclude local news. Whatever their scope, however world-wide their field, and their news-gathering facilities, they cannot ignore nor depreciate the home news. Community interest is the basis of virtually all journalism, the hub around which journalism revolves, the bread upon the table of journalism's subsistence. The factor of proximity, therefore, has large weight in the judgment of news values.

Local interest, however, may be manifest in an event

occurring at a distance. Recurring to the illustration of the fire in the preceding paragraph, the man who owned the house, if not himself dwelling therein, would be as much concerned in the event as those who inhabited the building. And that concern would be as active if he lived a thousand miles away. The people of a certain town, to present another illustration, have invested heavily in the stock of a manufacturing company whose plant is in a distant state, or possibly in a foreign country. The destruction of that plant would be news of local interest, though the event itself would not be local. A prominent citizen of a town is murdered at some place far away from home. The news of the crime is perhaps of as much interest in that town as if the event itself had occurred there. We are all especially interested not only in occurrences in our own community but in occurrences anywhere that particularly involve or concern the people or the welfare of our community.

But happily our interest in the news is not limited to our individual or community associations. While these most intimately and directly concern us, we want to know what is going on elsewhere in the world. And the response to this interest, and its encouragement, constitutes one of the most important tasks of journalism. For the wider the field of our interests the larger the field of knowledge from which we may draw, and the broader our understandings and sympathies. In the selection of such news the principle of relative proximity, or association, is still of importance, interest ordinarily decreasing with the distance, as has been

said. There are many and important exceptions to this rule, but none the less it is not to be ignored in the choice of general news. There is, first of all, a regional field about the point of publication to be considered, the territory outside its own particular community in which the newspaper circulates more or less extensively. The news of this region has special claims to consideration, second only to local news, and is judged by much the same principles of relative values. The state as a whole may come within this field, or only a part of it may be included, but in either case the official news of the state, the operations of state government, is of prime importance, having more or less interest to every part of the state and to every individual within it. News of the action or proposals of the federal government is, of course, of particular interest to every section of the country, as a rule, without regard to distance from the seat of government, but there is much news from this source of special local or sectional interest which it is the province of journalism to distinguish. The foreign news that is of most interest, generally speaking, is that which touches or affects our own national relations, whether political, economic or social, but still we may be vastly interested in an event which does not touch us at all, particularly if it has dramatic elements.

But in the selection of all news, whether local, regional, state or national, certain elemental principles apply. The first consideration, it should be repeated, is the presumption of public interest and the estimate of the measure of that interest. This is not the only

consideration, and it is the duty of journalism to publish much news that is lacking in public interest. But nevertheless public interest is to be desired as to all news, and as to most news it is essential if the newspaper is to have readers. But aside from proximity or personal concern, already discussed, what are the qualities in news that appeal to public interest?

Most active among these is that quality that is termed "human interest," which may be defined as an appeal to the emotional rather than to intellectual appreciation, an appeal to instinct rather than to thought. This embraces the whole drama of life in all its varied and contrasting aspects. Tragedy and comedy, suffering, sorrow and joy, pleasure and pain, virtue and vice, riches and poverty, destruction and construction, are all to be found in the news of the day, appealing to human sympathy, pity, admiration and emulation, to righteous indignation and condemnation, as well as often to baser instincts. At the basis of the sources of human interest, for example, may be placed the universal attraction of a struggle between opposing forces of any character. Life itself being a continuous conflict it follows that conflict not only produces more news but arouses a greater degree of interest, in the generality of mankind, than anything else. Whether the contest is one of skill or of strength, one of principles or of force, whether it is material, intellectual or spiritual, the fight's the thing that appeals most strongly to human interest. The sporting pages and their myriad readers testify to this attraction, and it is this instinctive attraction which draws absorbing attention to the news of a

prize fight or a war, of a political campaign, of a conflict between capital and labor, of the trials in court, of moral and religious controversies. Some of these, to be sure, involve intellectual understanding and appreciation, but no contest ever reaches so high an elevation of intellect or spirituality that there is no element of interest in the fight simply as a fight. And that is not an instinct to be disparaged, however low some of its manifestations may be. There can be no progress without struggle, and it is essential to progress that there be a public interest in the struggle from which to draw support for the advancement.

But in the technical sense the term "human interest" is seldom applied to matters of large importance. It pertains more particularly to the sentiments and attractions of social relations, the minor manifestations of humanity or inhumanity, the things that appeal to the heart, to the passions of hatred, avarice, envy or lust, or merely to the curiosity, whether legitimate or illegitimate, as to the condition, movement and conduct of others; things, in short, that may have much of bad or good in them. This class of news is so elemental in its appeal, so attractive to the larger number of people, that the temptation to fill columns with it, to draw special attention to it with big headlines, to seek for it when it does not appear upon the surface of events, to create it by the exaggeration and expansion of trifles, is very great, and in no department of newspaper publication is the privilege and responsibility of journalism so much abused as in this one.

But human interest in the broader sense referred to,

and, with limitations, in the more restricted technical sense, is the great reservoir from which journalism legitimately draws extensive support, and thereby contributes to its own influence and value in the public service through the enlargement of the field to which it supplies information and opinion. Moreover, emotional impression rightly directed, has its uses, and is often as important as intellectual impression. At times it is even more important, for many of the greatest advances of civilization have been secured through the sweep of emotions aroused by information. It is no less true that the baser emotions may be aroused in the same way, and it is the task of the conscientious journalist so to discriminate in the selection of news of this character, and so to balance the essential publication of the events of wrongdoing that ever color the news of the day, with the news of the good and with instructive and constructive information, that the total and constant impression of his journal is for the betterment and advancement of society.

And this brings us to the chief function of journalism, the publication of news that has intrinsic value as information, that is essentially instructive through the impartation of knowledge helpful to the individual or the public, that spreads enlightenment as to events of real merit and concern and as to the relations and meanings of such events. Such news may or may not be interesting to the average reader, but the newspaper that fails to supply it in due measure, according to the field it occupies, is neglecting its duty to the public and is evading the obligations laid upon the press

generally by the protective laws which give it a peculiar status. Interest, it has been said, is the first requisite of news from the standpoint of journalism. News may have interest without value save as entertainment. Entertainment, however, is an inducement to circulation, and therefore to wider reading of the whole paper, that is not to be entirely neglected. But this class of news is a means to an end, and that end is the larger dissemination of that news of information having intrinsic value which is here under consideration. News of this character may have, and often does have, a public interest as wide and absorbing as the news of mere entertainment. It may, indeed, take first place in the public interest. There is, therefore, news, much news, which has both interest and value, and such news is the best news. But there is also news of importance and value that is lacking in public interest which it is continuously necessary to print if journalism is to fulfill its responsibility to the public.

"Table-talk," says Herbert Spencer, "proves that nine out of ten people read what amuses them or interests them rather than what instructs them." The truth of this is not to be denied, and the recognition and application of this principle is essential to successful journalism, whatever its purposes. But this does not alter the fact that instruction is as necessary to the nine as to the one; and for a very great deal of instruction, essential to the maintenance of democracy and to material and spiritual progress along many lines, the newspaper is the only vehicle of knowledge, the only didactic instrument. It is the task of the newspaper

to chronicle the events of the day, and it is its duty to give space to news of importance, which the public should know, even though the public lacks interest in it. It is its duty to inform and instruct, to inform and instruct, continuously, as to important matters developing in the news, even in the face of public indifference.

For that is one of the obligations of journalism. And notwithstanding indifference it is never lost motion. For there is always at least the one in ten who seeks instruction, and the aggregate of all of the ones in all of the tens is not only considerable but it generally comprises the most influential elements in any community. In effect, therefore, it is much more than one in ten. But that is not all. The reader who does not seek news of this character and does not want it can rarely escape some impress from it, however slight. To find what he desires he must at least glance at the headlines which call attention to and briefly epitomize the news of the day. Each of these catches his eye for an instant, and from each he has acquired, willy-nilly, a bit of the information it conveys. Moreover, if he recognizes in that fleeting glance that here is something important, something that he ought to know about, regardless of his personal interest, if he is not to appear ignorant before others, he gives more than a cursory reading of headlines to the item, and often finds himself interested where he least expected to be.

But it is frequently the duty, and the pleasure, of the editor to cultivate public interest in news of this nature. Indeed, it is in the stimulation of public in-

terest in matters of public concern that journalism contributes most to public service. Local movements for civic betterment, for example, are largely dependent upon popular support, and such support can seldom be obtained until popular interest has been awakened through continuous newspaper publicity and advocacy. Of still greater importance, though perhaps of less intimate concern to the individual or to the community, is the stimulation of public interest in state, national and international matters, to much of which the public is normally indifferent and requires the urge of persistent information and comment.

In the publication of news, therefore, journalism does not fulfill its obligations, either to itself or to the public, when it makes immediate interest the sole test of judgment in determining what to print. On the other hand, it cannot best serve itself or serve the public unless it makes interest the predominant consideration in such determination. Most news, that is to say, must be selected on the basis of the interest it is likely to awaken at sight in the average reader of the publication, and in that judgment human instincts, human sentiments and human emotions, as well as human intelligence, must be considered and served; but there is much news that it is the duty of journalism to print regardless of public interest.

CHAPTER IV

THE REJECTION OF NEWS

It has been shown that constant and varying limitations of available space compel a constant adjustment of news to meet the varying restrictions of room. Always there is more news than can be printed. Always there must be more or less rejection and condensation. The newspaper does not create events nor do events consider its convenience. It must take events as they come, whether in great volume or less, and adjust accounts of events to the capacity of publication. The item that is rejected to-day might have found a place yesterday. The item that fills a column to-day might have been entirely excluded, or greatly condensed, yesterday. Or an item accepted early in the day may be necessarily rejected before the paper goes to press.

Conditions under which discrimination is exercised are, therefore, different each day and change with the hours. But in reducing the volume of news to fit the capacity of publication that which is of least importance or of least interest is first sacrificed, the effort being to crowd into the paper, not all of the news of the day, for that is rarely, if ever, possible, but the best of the news. In the exercise of this discrimination the editors in direct charge of the news must act upon their judg-

ment of news values, and act instantly as a rule. When doubt arises there may be deliberation and conference, but in the daily publication there is little time or opportunity for this. In nearly all cases immediate decision is essential. In the continuous stream of news that flows through the hands of news editors items are accepted or rejected, given full space or condensed, upon their instantaneous estimate of relative importance or interest, always, however, under the restraints of varying conditions of available space, always subject to sudden and unexpected demands for space for fresh and important news, requiring radical readjustment of all that has been done, and the elimination or reduction of much that has been previously accepted.

In all other productive enterprise the relation between demand and capacity is comparatively uniform, or is at least calculable for a short period of time. The editor is always confronted by unknown quantities. Each day he begins a new creation with no definite knowledge of the volume or the nature of the materials with which he must create. He has, to be sure, the expectation of certain pre-announced events, and he has certain routine sources of daily news, but he does not know what will develop from them nor what they will demand from him. No foreknowledge or prescience can enable him to see through the day, or even through an hour, to make definite calculations in advance. The news, most of it utterly unexpected, may come to him in a steady flow or it may fall upon him as an avalanche. He knows not, nor can he know, what the day may bring forth. All he can be sure of is that he will have

more news than he can print, and that he must be prepared for the worst.

And his task differs from other productive enterprise in that he is dealing wholly with ephemeral materials. In the manufacture of a newspaper the principal raw material is news. In all other manufacturing material that which is not used to-day may be used to-morrow or later. It may be perishable, as in the canning industry, for example, but not immediately so. There is no necessity for waste of good stock. But news that cannot be used at once, to-day, is generally worthless to-morrow. Moreover, in all other manufacturing the supply of raw material can be regulated by the capacity of production. The editor cannot regulate supply. He must take each day all the news that comes to him through his established sources, no matter how great the volume may be. All that he cannot use is waste, unavoidable and irrecoverable waste. And this waste is not limited to the news he rejects upon examination. The uncertainty with which he constantly contends compels the daily sacrifice of much that is accepted and "put in type." Usually every daily newspaper has more news in type each day than it can find room for on its pages, and this excess, or "overset," is waste that to some degree is inescapable.

Knowledge of all these conditions is necessary to an understanding of the difficulties under which diurnal journalism labors and must labor. The newspaper must be created within the day. It must be created from materials of varying nature and volume. It must take all the news that comes to it, but it can print no more

than its pages will hold. Necessarily, therefore, judgment as to what shall or shall not be printed must be exercised with rapidity upon a flowing current that may be at one moment a gentle stream and at the next a freshet. Necessarily, also, more or less news must be rejected solely because of space limitations, and frequently news that has been accepted and put in type must even then be rejected for the same reason. The fact that an item of news is not published indicates either that the judgment of the editor as to its value, from the standpoint of interest or importance or propriety, warrants its rejection on its merits, or that mechanical limitations compel its rejection as relatively unimportant or uninteresting to the readers of the publication, in comparison with other news of the particular day which is printed.

A veteran newspaperman once said that the judgment of "what not to print" was the supreme test of editorial ability. This may be an exaggeration, but at any rate the negative side of discrimination is as important as the positive. The limitations of space compel a continuous balancing of values for this reason alone, upon a basis of value that may vary with each day or each hour, according to the volume of news. Often the weight of a hair influences decision for or against publication, but judgment upon each item must be rendered and rendered instantly. To "kill" an item that ought to be used is as bad judgment as to use an item that ought to be "killed." But all this refers to decision in response to the insistent demands of space. Decisions upon the considerations of safety and considerations

of propriety are no less essential and no less important.

The newspaper is responsible under the law, and may be held to answer in civil or criminal proceedings, for injury done to persons by untruthful statements affecting their reputation or welfare. The truth is no libel, but the truth is not always clear, nor the means of substantiation certain. Moreover, there is no agreement among legal authorities as to what constitutes a libel. Libel suits are unprofitable even when the newspaper is vindicated, and unless some distinctive public service justifies the risk, no avoidable opportunity for action at libel should be given. Yet it is the business of the newspaper to print the news; that is the primary purpose of its existence; and in doing this it is constantly in danger of unconsciously perpetrating a libel, or of publishing something that prompts an action for libel. No respectable newspaper libels any man with intent. No such newspaper prints a statement reflecting upon the integrity of any man unless it believes it to be true and its publication justified as a matter of news. Both self-interest and right demand that libelous charges, which mean false charges, be avoided. It is, therefore, the task of the editor to scrutinize all news with care and to reject all items containing charges that would be libelous if untrue, if the evidence of truth is not clear, or to eliminate any statements that hold the danger of action at law. There is a general rule of the railway-train service which applies equally well to this, which is, "In case of doubt always take the safe side," and it was a frequent warning of the veteran editor

already quoted that "you never get a libel suit for what you don't print." [1] Considerations of safety require a careful discrimination in the matter of news, for the rejection of that which is libelous.

But considerations of propriety are also importantly involved in that discrimination. It has been said that there is a difference between giving the people what they want and giving them what they ought not to have. But what is it that the people ought not to have? "There is a great disposition in some quarters," said Chas. A. Dana, once upon a time, "to say that the newspapers ought to limit the amount of news they print; that certain kinds of news ought not to be published. I do not know how that is. I am not prepared to maintain any abstract position on that line; but I have always felt that whatever the Divine Providence permitted to occur I was not too proud to report." But in practice few editors exercised a finer discrimination than he between news that was "fit to print" and news that was not, recognizing by his own editorial management that there was a distinction, that there were lines beyond which respectable journalism could not go in the publication of news. The printing of news of crime and vice presents a problem about which there has been much controversy, both within and without the field of journalism. This is the class of news to which Mr. Dana referred in the remark quoted, and it was to the contention, from without, that such news should be rejected *in toto* that he applied the view that has become a

[1] Joseph B. McCullagh.

classical utterance in journalism. And in principle his position is correct.

News of crime and vice should be printed. It is not only proper to print such news but it is a public duty to print it. Crime and vice constitute problems with which society must constantly deal. And if it is to deal with them with any degree of effectiveness it must have knowledge of them, of their nature, extent, and the forces and influences behind them. Public opinion is as important a factor in the prevention, suppression or punishment of crime as in any other field of human activity, but public opinion is never exercised in any field until it is aroused by public events. Crime and vice are menaces to society, and as such must be continuously and actively opposed by the agencies which society creates for its protection. But in the protection of society the law, the courts and the police must have the public support which can only come from a measure of acquaintance with the facts and conditions with which they have to deal. If the news of this character were suppressed the people would be deprived of the only general and constant source of knowledge as to such events.

All social progress is dependent upon information. If we do not know there is wrong how are we to perceive the need of right? If we do not know what is wrong how are we to know what to attack? If we do not know the extent of wrong how are we to arouse and array the forces of good? Right is might only when its eyes are open, only when it sees and appraises the power opposed to it, and only when it is urged to action

by the knowledge of the danger that confronts it. To suppress the news of evil would be to blind the eyes of right and to deceive it with a sense of security in the face of peril. Evil always flourishes most in the darkness. It grows upon concealment. It fattens under public indifference resulting from ignorance of its activities. It is essential that the light of publicity be thrown upon it, that its nature, its scope and its habits be revealed. The publication of evil is a public duty and a public service.

But aside from that there is a constant public interest in things evil. Is this interest wrong? It is a universal instinct of humanity. Are we given any instinct that is not designed primarily to promote our welfare? Granting that much evil, possibly all evil, grows out of the abuse or misapplication of instinct, is it not true that our instincts normally operate for our good? "The active part of man," says Newman, "consists of powerful instincts. Some are gentle and continuous, others violent and short; some baser, some nobler, all necessary." The proper use of our instincts never causes evil; it is only their abuse that creates it. And this abuse is a departure from normality. We are interested in crime because it is abnormal, and this interest, in reference to society in general, is self-protective. It makes evil conspicuous, impresses it upon our consciousness and our imagination, compels us to examine it, to realize its wrong and its dangers, and constantly to fortify ourselves against it. Here and there the associated instincts of imitation or acquisition may make interest an influence for evil in certain individuals, but

generally speaking its result is an abhorrence of, and an antagonism toward, evil.

If this were not so goodness would long since have perished from the earth. For mankind has ever been attracted by the abnormality of evil, by its departures from the innate standards of right, by its violence, its tragedies, its catastrophes. The literature of all time is permeated with it. It runs like a crimson stream from the beginning to the end of the Bible. It is the theme of poetry, of fiction, of the drama, of opera, and history is crowded with it. "The reign of Antoninus," says Gibbon, "is marked by the rare advantage of furnishing very few materials for history, which indeed is little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind." If interest in crime and attention to crime promoted crime, evil would have triumphed over good long ago. But, on the contrary, that interest has always operated to restrain evil by revealing its character, its dangers to the individual and to society as a whole, and its usual results in sorrow or punishment.

But, it is said, the publication of news of crime and vice has a bad influence on the young. For reasons already stated that may be denied, unless in the presentation of the news evil is cloaked in such garments as to make it enticing. That there is wrong in the world every child discovers very early in life. The attempt to conceal from youth the existence of evil has never succeeded. On the contrary, the effort invariably throws a glamour over evil and arouses a curiosity to know more about it. Somehow, sometime, somewhere,

youth learns the nature and extent of evil, and this in some measure it must learn before it is fully equipped for the battle of life. The important thing is that it be taught to distinguish right from wrong, and to realize clearly that right is ever good and that evil, however garbed, is always bad, and always destructive. It is true that the publication of crime acts now and then upon the instincts of imitation, but this occurs as a rule only when there is lack of that knowledge, or where there is evil association or inherent disposition in the direction of wrong; and given any one of such conditions criminality is likely to result regardless of publication. As a general proposition neither youth nor maturity would profit by the elimination of legitimate news of crime and vice from the press, while the public would be deprived of information that it needs for self-regulation and self-protection.

But unquestionably there is news of crime and vice that ought not to be printed, news that is of no consequence from the standpoint of public welfare and that appeals only to a prurient curiosity. And there is news of public importance from which salacious details should be stricken in the interests of elementary decency. The newspaper should go into the home, where it should be welcomed and treasured. Much of its value and much of its influence depends upon the domestic confidence it inspires. Therefore it should be clean, in spirit and in speech. It is its duty to present the events of the day, and many of them may be ugly, but ugly news can be reported in clean words. And ugly news when presented should be unmitigated. There should be no

gloss upon it to make it attractive. Its importance should not be exaggerated by conspicuous position, by the volume of space given to it, or by its garment of words. It may, indeed, be important enough, however ugly, to justify such position and such space, but the warrant for that should rest upon its news value from the standpoint of respectable public interest and of the public right to know the facts. Valuable public lessons are frequently given by the exposure of whited sepulchers, but service and not response to salacity should be the motive of publication and should govern the manner of its presentation. To devote columns of space to a crime or a scandal solely because of its prurient attractions may be momentarily helpful to circulation but it stains the character of journalism and lowers the newspaper in public esteem, by which it suffers loss in its best asset.

The service of journalism in the publication of news of crime and vice is to reveal them in their ugliness, to show their magnitude and their danger, and this is a real and a necessary service. Upon journalism, however, rests the responsibility of discriminating between what is of service and what is not, between what is of proper public interest and what is not, between what is of value as legitimate news and what is a mere response to lewd curiosity, in short, between what is fit to print and what is not fit to print, judged by its own standards of fitness. It cannot wholly eliminate such news and perform its duty. On the other hand, it cannot let itself become a purveyor of sewage without offense to decency and a lowering of public confidence in its rectitude.

The newspaper is to no little extent a guardian of public morals through its constant revelation of wrong. With most people the fear of publicity is a more potent influence in behalf of uprightness than fear of the law. There are, to be sure, men and women who care little for exposure except for its results in the application of the law. There are some, indeed, who glory in the notoriety that comes from the publication of their offendings. But generally speaking the great majority of men and women fear any publicity that is to their discredit or shame, and to all such it is a wholesome preventive of misdoing. To those who have no such sense of disgrace the fear of the law should be made more potent by the increased certainty of punishment. That, of course, is a problem for the administrations of the law. But journalism might well contribute to the fear of the punishments of the law by giving more attention in the news to the convictions of offenders against the law. A crime is committed of sufficient interest to justify publication but not one that arouses great public interest. The case pursues its slow way through the courts. The evanescent interest in the crime disappears and when conviction results no word of it appears in the press. This is in accord with the rule of interest, but a valuable public service could be rendered if convictions for criminal offense were more generally reported.

It is the business of the newspaper to print the news, as has been repeatedly said, yet "suppression of the news" is one of the most frequent complaints against journalism. It is, however, one of the least justified,

if any sinister significance be given to the charge. All the problems of discrimination that have been under discussion involve rejection of news for many proper reasons. And the failure to print news for which there is no room, or which in the judgment of the editor ought not to be printed, whether because it is unimportant, unfit, or relatively uninteresting to his readers, is the only basis for most of the complaints that are made, usually by people who have been disappointed by the absence from the paper of items in which they were personally interested. It is the duty of the newspaper to print the news that is important; it is to its own interest to print the news that is attractive to the public, within the limits of propriety that have been mentioned. But what is important, either actually or relatively, and what is attractive, are questions that must be decided by the individual judgment of the editors of each newspaper, acting always of necessity under the pressure of time and space. There should, however, be no exterior or ulterior influence on that judgment. It should be founded solely upon the conception of news values in general, and, in particular, of its values for the section of the public which the newspaper serves. While a considerable proportion of news is of manifest importance to all newspapers alike, or to all alike in a country, region or community, there is much news whose importance depends upon the nature and purposes of the publication and the character of its readers. That is to say, some news that is of value to one newspaper may be of no value, or relatively little value, to another. The editor must consider not only the comparative im-

portance of news of general interest but the particular interests and tastes of his territory and constituency. Naturally, too, there are differences of judgment among editors, resulting from individual variations of temperament, association and opinion, which cause one editor to reject an item which another would print, or to put in a few lines what another would present with prominence. These, however, are but the differences of personality that give variety to life, as they do to journalism, which is an epitome of life. But whatever these differences, the conscientious editor—most editors are conscientious and all should be—holds the publication of news that is of real importance to his readers to be a paramount duty.

CHAPTER VI

TRUTH IN THE NEWS

THE essential element of all news is truth. If news is not substantially true the label is as false as the report. For news is the report of events that have occurred, or of conditions that exist. If the events did not occur, if the conditions do not exist, the report is untrue, and being untrue, is not news. Fiction, fabrication, falsehood, may appear in the guise of news but it is an imposture. The imposture may be deliberate, or it may be the result of deception or misunderstanding, but in either case the product, being wholly false, is something for which language provides many terms but "news" is not among them. The test of the reality of news is truth.

And the measure of truth within the news is the test of its quality. Absolute truth is a difficult attainment in any communications from man to man, whether by word of mouth, by letter, or by publication in book, magazine or newspaper, unless it is limited to a single and bare statement of fact. One man tells another that John Smith is dead. This is absolute truth, incapable of denial or modification. But when he begins to relate the circumstances of death the chances of error increase with the extent of the details. Even if he is a witness of the circumstances leading to the death, the limita-

tions of observation, of knowledge, and of memory render absolute and complete accuracy in every detail of his narration a difficult accomplishment. And this difficulty is increased when he has his information from others, however careful they may have been, and however truthful he may desire to be.

This difficulty and these human limitations are constantly in evidence in the courts, where numerous witnesses testifying to their knowledge of the same event vary widely in their testimony, though every one may be perfectly honest. Here are men and women under oath to tell "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth" and conscientiously striving to do so, yet as a rule failing in some degree in the fulfillment of that obligation. Any two, three or four men seeing the same occurrence will tell different stories about it, varying with the points of observation, the nature of the impressions made upon each individual mind, and the personal qualities which make one a better observer or narrator than another. Each one may be entirely trustworthy, and yet no two can tell exactly the same story as to every detail, though all may agree as to the major facts. All of them may be telling the truth notwithstanding the apparent differences, but it is more probable that all of them are wrong in some degree.

Now if these natural limitations and obstacles to the communication of truth are effective to an extent in preventing the ascertainment of the absolute truth, "the whole truth and nothing but the truth," when the will to literal and exact truth is uppermost, they are still more effective where they are influenced by habits, desires

or purposes that are against accuracy of statement. The habit of exaggeration is a common failing. The desire to impress the hearer of news with its important or dramatic interest is almost universal in the bearers of news. But not infrequently there are persons who for purposes of their own seek to give false impressions by describing an event, or phases of it, with deliberate untruth. Some or all of these influences are likely to cloud the water in the well of truth.

Upon journalism rests the responsibility for the dissemination of news of public importance and interest. If, then, truth is the test of the reality of news, and the measure of truth within the news is the test of its quality, it is by that test that journalism should be judged and must expect to be judged. Absolute truth is an ideal that is often no more attainable than absolute sanctity in human personality, but the nearer the approach to it the nearer will it come to the consummation of perfection. Yet in the collection and publication of the news journalism must work with the human agencies and deal with humanity under the limitations of human qualities that make the ascertainment of truth one of constant difficulty.

News is obtained locally by the reporter and afield by the correspondent and the news agency. The newspaper is, first of all, dependent upon the character and ability of its own news gatherers. A reporter, for example, is directed to "cover" a certain event. It is his duty to obtain the essential facts and embody them in the report he makes to the office or prepares for publication. Upon him rests primarily the responsibility for

truth and accuracy. If the editor accepts the report and prints it the responsibility is transferred to, and assumed by, the newspaper. In local news the editor generally has some knowledge of the matter to which the reporter is assigned, and if in doubt may take steps to verify the report. Still it is largely upon the reporter's skill in ascertaining facts and his conscientious care in reporting that the editor must rely.

In news outside the local field he is entirely dependent upon the character of the correspondent. Whatever the correspondent sends him, whether upon direct order or otherwise, he must assume it to be true, and use or not, according to his judgment based upon its face value. Seldom is it practicable within the time available to verify a "story" that comes over the wires. Yet the newspaper is just as responsible for the news sent by a correspondent as for that which it obtains through the local reporter, and the newspaper's accuracy, and, what is more important, its reputation for accuracy, rests almost entirely upon the quality of its newsgathering representatives. Errors, to be sure, may be discovered by the copy reader and corrected, and doubtful statements may be eliminated. But none the less both veracity and accuracy depend upon the character and ability of the men who cover the news.

And these men, or women, are rarely witnesses of the events they report, unless the events are expected. If they are not witnesses, most if not all the information they obtain must be secured from others, in which they must contend with the human limitations in accuracy of observation and of statement. If the event is ex-

pected and the reporter is at the scene, he may not see or hear all that occurs and is again dependent upon others to piece out the information he has acquired by personal observation. And even if he sees or hears all that happens he is still a human being with more or less of the human tendency to error. In all consideration of truth in the news these limitations and circumstances should in fairness be taken into account. And there are other elements of error. News when obtained must be transmitted to the newspaper, must be put into writing, and the writing put into type. All these processes involve the possibility, or probability, of mistakes, that may be of no consequence or that may be serious; mistakes that may or may not be discoverable before publication.

But none the less it is the task and the duty of journalism to obtain and to publish the news, and it is not performing this task efficiently, nor doing its duty to the public it serves, unless its reports are substantially true. The measure of service which a newspaper renders to its readers, whether that service be collective or individual, depends absolutely upon the accuracy of the information it supplies. And the measure of public confidence in the integrity of the newspaper must depend upon the constant evidence of the essential truth of the news it presents. There are, therefore, two compelling reasons for making the standards of accuracy as high as possible. It is true that a publication can attract readers by pandering to the sensational at the expense of truth, by expanding a little fact into impressive fiction, by appealing to the sense of the mon-

strous by exaggeration or by utter falsehood, but such a publication is not a newspaper, in the proper sense, and the process of its creation is not journalism, in the proper sense. For falsehood is not news, fiction is not news, and the publication that deliberately and habitually presents untruth in the garment of news is not only an imposition upon the public but an offense to journalism. The measure of truth within the news is the test of journalism, and upon this test alone can it justify its existence or merit public respect and confidence.

Truth, however, in relation to news, needs definition. News primarily is a report of an occurrence or a condition. If the report presents the salient facts accurately, the concrete facts, it is presenting the truth. For news deals fundamentally with events, with things that have happened or are happening, that are susceptible to observation, and that may be verified, as any other concrete facts, by the evidence of the senses. The truth it presents is the truth of narration. It is not concerned, in the first instance, with the interpretation of events, although, as a secondary function, it may delve into causes and purposes and report opinions of others bearing upon them. The newspapers' own interpretation of events belongs in the companion field of journalism wherein truth may take on other definitions and incur obligations of a larger scope. The specific province of the news is to present the account of an event with substantial accuracy. When it has done that it has told the truth and fulfilled its purpose to the best of its ability. Nor can it properly be charged with untruth if it fails to narrate every phase or every detail of the

event. How much or how little it tells, may depend upon the extent of the facts obtainable, upon the judgment of the editor as to the relative importance or interest to his readers of the event, or upon the space he has available. If the essential facts are accurately given, however concisely, the truth is presented.

But the claim of truth can hardly be justified if the news is not reported impartially. It is as important to the standing of journalism, and to its effectiveness, that news be unbiased, as it is that news be true. If journalism is to provide the people with information upon which public opinion is to be based it is essential that its news of events be uncolored by prejudice, that facts be presented fairly as well as accurately. This does not mean, where issues of any sort are creating news, that each of two sides should be given the same space, or that where an event concerning one side is reported search should be made for counterbalancing material affecting the other. News being a report of events is subject to events, not superior to them. Somebody must do something, or something must occur, of public interest or importance, before there is any news to report, and the space given to this news depends upon its intrinsic value, whatever may be its bearings upon the controversy. It may be that one side is creating news day after day while the other side is creating none, and the one side is in consequence being given continuous publicity, whether to its advantage or disadvantage, while the other side is given little. In a great strike, for example, the unions initiate the event which brings the controversy into public notice, and they, being on the

offensive, as a rule, create more news than the employers, who are on the defensive. It is the strike and the events growing out of the strike whatever they may be, rather than the internal merits of the controversy, that constitute the news. It is not the function of the news to try causes, but to present the facts that are revealed in occurrences touching the public interest. Statements of leaders on both sides convey information, helpful or otherwise, to public understanding, and are classed as news because of their relation to events and the light they may cast upon them. How far a newspaper may permit its columns to be used as a forum for public discussion, however, depends upon the circumstances of the event, the degree of public interest aroused, and its actual public importance. It may invite and warrant particular investigation by the newspaper to bring hidden facts to light, or to make clear those already revealed. But all this is but incidental to the publication of the news of the overt acts of the occasion, a subsidiary or auxiliary service that may or may not be undertaken, inasmuch as no obligation rests upon the newspaper to go beyond the salient facts of occurrences. It is not the task of journalism, in its news department, to interpret or to justify events, but to present the events themselves, as fairly, impartially and accurately as possible, leaving the expression of opinions to its editorial department, or to statements from persons or groups of persons whose views may have news value in connection with a specific event. Opinions may also find a proper place in the reports of special correspondents whose names are signed to their corre-

spondence. Their task is often not only to report events but to endeavor to interpret them. Their views, however, are individual, and should be so understood.

The degree of accuracy with which an occurrence can be reported depends upon the completeness of the event, the accessibility of the facts and the dependableness of the sources of information. A completed event may be observed as a whole. The facts in relation to it are within definite boundaries. Certain information is to be obtained, and if obtainable from personal observation or reliable authority, the report, like the event, may be complete, and with a near approach to absolute truth. In the case of a fire, to take a simple example, the event is complete when the fire engines withdraw from the scene, if there are no criminal complications. The identity of the owner of the property, the estimate of the loss, the extent of the insurance, are details easily obtainable as a rule. The item is finished, the important facts are presented, and there is nothing more to be said. But suppose there are evidences of arson. Then the fire is not a completed event. It is a continuing event which may develop aspects of much larger importance and interest in what follows the fire than in the fire itself. The bare fact of the fire may be reported with as much accuracy as if the event were completed, but the criminal circumstances bring in elements of uncertainty. The evidences of crime may be direct or circumstantial, or both direct and circumstantial, and the less accessible and verifiable the facts the greater must be the liability to error in the news, just as the trial court finds greater difficulty in ascertaining the truth

where the truth is obscured. The news-gatherer is not trying a case, but he is seeking the facts that are necessary to the presentation of the news, and he is confronted with the same obstacles with which the court must deal, without the powers of the court to extract evidence, and with a responsibility for libelous error that does not rest upon the court.

All this is stated, not to excuse untruth, which when deliberate is inexcusable, nor to excuse error, which is excusable only when unavoidable. Its purpose is to show that facts are not always simple and to be acquired merely by going and getting them; that they are, on the contrary, often complex, often obscure, often difficult of access and identification; that often they have different aspects when seen from different viewpoints by different observers, and are therefore conflicting; it is to show that the newspaper has no magic wand to reveal the truth, but when it is veiled or concealed must make the best of the information obtainable and seek laboriously for more facts where the importance of the event warrants, even as the courts and other fact-finding agencies of government must do; it is to show that truth in the news, even as in these authoritative agencies of law, is a relative quality, sometimes reaching the absolute, but more often merely an approximation. Rarely, in law or in news, is there such a thing as "the whole truth and nothing but the truth." Approximate truth is, because in the nature of things it must be, sufficient for the purposes of everyday life. No one claims that even history, wherein facts have been weighed and scrutinized and analyzed through years of inquiry and de-

liberate study, is more than an approximation to truth. How then can it be expected that the news of the day can be perfect in its accuracy and completeness, can be always, if ever, "the whole truth and nothing but the truth"?

Yet the newspaper that understands its mission and realizes its responsibility as a purveyor of news, places accuracy at the head of professional virtues and seeks constantly to attain it. To what extent does it succeed? To what extent can it succeed? It has been said that the degree of accuracy depends upon "the completeness of the event, the accessibility of the facts and the dependableness of the sources of information." The factor of completeness has been briefly discussed. Where facts are readily accessible and the sources of information reliable, newspaper reports are, as a rule, substantially accurate. "Wherever there is good machinery of record the modern news service works with great precision. There is one on the stock exchange, and the news of price movements is flashed over tickers with dependable accuracy. There is a machinery for election returns and when the counting and tabulating are well done, the result of a national election is usually known on the night of the election. In civilized communities, deaths, births, marriages and divorces are recorded, and are known accurately, except where there is concealment or neglect. The machinery exists for some, and only some, aspects of industry and government, in varying degrees of precision for securities, money and staples, bank clearances, realty transactions, wage scales. It exists for imports and exports because

they pass through a customhouse and can be directly recorded." [1] Formal acts of public officials, decisions of the courts, passage or rejection of measures by legislative bodies, movements of shipping, military and naval orders, results of sporting contests—all such matters are, generally speaking, correctly reported. All that is accessible, that is definite, that is authoritative, that is complete in itself, may be, and usually is, recorded in the news with precision. There is, to be sure, the chance of error in transmission, in editing and in typographical composition, but relatively such errors in such material are infrequent. And news of such character constitutes the staples of journalism. They include in very large measure the information of utility and of value that the public requires.

But if newspapers printed nothing else they would be dry reading. It is written that man cannot live by bread alone. Bread and water, in sooth, are fundamentals of diet, but limitation to them is considered one of the severest punishments in penal institutions. Human welfare as well as human taste requires a variety of condiments, some of which contribute only to pleasure. And the same variety of desires and of needs controls the operation of journalism. The newspaper, therefore, cannot confine itself to recorded facts, but must spread upon its table reports of an infinite variety of events for the accuracy of which it must assume entire responsibility, though the facts may be difficult of access, though they may be only partially obtainable, though the event itself may be incomplete. And within

[1] Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion.*

this vast field of news where there is usually more or less uncertainty and indefiniteness, where ascertainable facts are clouded by the presumption of other facts at the moment inaccessible, the newspaper is expected to present the news as precisely as possible, to present the truth as completely as the truth may be obtainable at the time the report is made. It is in this field that journalism finds its hardest tasks, and in this it wins its greatest victories. It is in this field particularly that it needs to strive constantly for accuracy and greater accuracy to the full extent that truth is attainable in each instance.

And this brings us again to the means of attainment, the quality and character of the reporter, and his training for the work, the quality, character and training of the copy reader, who handles the reports. "How few there be," said Sir Philip Sidney long ago, "that can discern between truth and truth-likeness, between sham and substance!" Yet such discernment is as essential to the good reporter or the good copy reader as that necessary, fundamental instinct of journalism which we term the "nose for news." It is only by stressing accuracy, fidelity to truth above all things, and the necessity of discernment between truth and truth-likeness, upon the foundations of news-gathering and news-preparation that journalism can approach the ideal of truth to which it must never cease to aspire.

CHAPTER VII

GETTING AND HANDLING THE NEWS

GETTING the news is, of course, the fundamental task of journalism. Events do not consider the convenience of the press, nor do they report themselves. News, it is true, travels by its own momentum, and the more important the event the swifter the flight. But in its spread it inevitably accumulates error and exaggeration. The newspaper cannot accept the news that comes to it on the winds of rumor save as a call for investigation. Getting the news, in the journalistic sense, is getting the facts, going direct to the seat of the event and by observation and inquiry ascertaining the salient truths of the occurrence as accurately as may be possible in the particular circumstances. Whether the event is at home or abroad, whether the instrument is the reporter or correspondent under the direct control of the newspaper, or the news agency which gathers its own reports for distribution to many newspapers, the principle of action is the same. The news-gatherer must go to the scene and get first hand information of the event.

The newspaper reporter is, first of all, a fact-finder. When he is assigned to cover an event, or some phase of an event, his task and his duty are to get the facts. But that usually involves much more than going after a bundle and bringing it home. It calls for the exercise

of qualities of the intelligence, the intuitive discrimination between what is important and what is not, between the essentials and the nonessentials; and the reasoning which deduces presumption from indication and thereby brings out vital facts that are obscured by circumstances or design. The smallest routine assignment may contain possibilities of great news, if the discernment to distinguish news is present. What is termed the "nose for news" is more than instinct, although it may seem to be instinctive. It is a quality of the intelligence, of the mind, which, though a gift of nature, needs to be associated with reason and developed through experience, as any other natural talent. The faculty of the artist, who sees beauty where others see nothing attractive; of the musician, who discerns harmonies not distinguished by the duller senses; of the poet, who finds in "the primrose by the river's brim" divine secrets not revealed to those to whom it is but a flower—all are endowed with that superior quality of discernment and distinction which in the reporter is the news sense, and which is essential to the highest success in any department of the profession of journalism. For journalism is fundamentally an art, an art of expression, and even as the colors of the painter must be mixed with brains, so the ascertainment and the presentation of the truths of daily events must be directed by both the intuitive and reasoning qualities of an intelligence adapted to this art if it is to depict life truly upon its ephemeral canvas.

A painter cannot be made of one who has no sense of color; a musician cannot be made of one who has no sense of harmony; nor can a journalist be made of one

who has no sense of news. But having the intuitive sense, or talent, one is not, because of it, a painter, a musician or a journalist. Poets, it is said, are born, not made, but like many sayings this is not true. Poets are born *and* made. There is no such thing as a born poet. The quality is born, but the poet is made by life, by experience, by training, by study, by education, all combining in the exercise of the quality. It is only through experience and application, indeed, that the quality is disclosed and developed. This is no less true of the journalist. There is no such thing as a born reporter, or a born editor. The news sense is essential, but that faculty must be cultivated by training and experience, must be developed by study, education and observation, which alone can make the journalist. "Journalism demands of its practitioners the widest range of intelligence, of knowledge and of experience, as well as natural and trained powers of observation and reasoning." [1] To the natural powers must be added the acquired powers in some degree, even at the beginning of journalistic practice, if the news is to be intelligently and accurately reported. Nor can the element of character be ignored. For if the measure of truth within the news is the test of journalism then it is obvious that the practice of the profession must be founded upon character.

All this is said to emphasize the importance of the qualities, natural and acquired, that are essential to news-gathering and publication upon the high plane of

[1] From preamble to *Canons of Journalism*, adopted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April, 1923.

truth to which all reputable journalism aspires. The progress of journalism toward and upon that elevation depends very largely upon the character and capacity of the news-gatherers and news-handlers, to whom is intrusted the primary and fundamental tasks of getting the facts and preparing the reports for publication. It is useless for editors or publishers to entertain ideals of perfection if the quality of the sources of production is unconsidered. No degree of care, of energy or of intelligence at the editorial desk, or in the managerial office, can make a dependable newspaper unless the reportorial and copy-reading staffs are dependable. That they are largely so is one of the distinctions of journalism, and one of the chief causes for its great advancement. The annals of journalism are filled with deeds of heroism and devotion by news-gatherers in search of truth, not to be excelled in the ranks of any other profession, and the loyalty, intelligence and activity of unrecorded thousands of such workers, in the field and at the desk, have constantly promoted and ennobled the Fourth Estate. It is, however, no disparagement of these to say that there is not enough of them, not enough of the right kind. Journalism is an institutional profession, and as the institution grows the demand for competent workers increases, while the supply, from the casual sources so long depended upon, decreases. But the demand is insistent and it calls more and more, not only for men and women in greater number who have the gift of nature that adapts them to the profession, but who have a foundation of education, general and specific, and some measure of preliminary training. It demands, that is

to say, not only more workers but workers who are better equipped *at the beginning* of professional practice. Granting the advantage of training through practical experience in actual newspaper work, the fact remains that opportunities for experience in all the elementals decrease with the increasing complexity and specialization of that work, particularly in the metropolitan field. General and technical education as a preparation for professional practice is demanded as much by circumstances as by the growing necessity for a sound and dependable foundation for professional dignity, standing and progress.

The schools of journalism, in short, must be increasingly relied upon as the sources of supply from which the ranks of journalism are to be recruited. Following the same road over which other and older professions have traveled it must eventually reach the point where for its own protection it will set up definite standards of qualification for admission to practice. But in the meantime it cannot, without loss, fail to demand the best obtainable material for its service, in the quantity needed. To accomplish this it is essential to encourage the aspiration to journalistic service in the youth of the land, and to impress the conviction that it is an honorable and desirable calling, whose direct awards are attractive and one which offers exceptional opportunities for individual usefulness and achievement. The best agency for such impression is the school. Educational preparation is as requisite to success in journalism as in other professions. Newspapermen are not to be made in schools, nor are lawyers or doctors, but properly con-

ducted schools may lay a foundation of useful knowledge, impart the elements of professional practice and inculcate professional ideals, all of which are requisite to the best results in journalism, and must be acquired in actual practice if not obtained beforehand. Moreover, the school may be helpful in establishing a professional spirit, in laying the groundwork of professional ethics, in fixing fundamental principles within the callow mind. Only by practical experience, hard work and continuous study, added to natural fitness, can a proficient journalist be produced, and these are essential to proficiency, and success, in any profession; but preparatory education is not less useful in this than in other callings, and journalism as a profession is as fully worthy of the respect which the demand for such a preparation implies as is any other.

Getting the news, getting it with substantial accuracy, depends then upon the quality and character of the news-gatherer. It is his task, first of all, to get the facts, the salient facts, of the event to be reported. It can never be too strongly impressed, not only here but in every newspaper office, that fact is the fundamental element of journalism. But fact alone is but the bare bones of the news. It is the essential material of production, and the highest skill, the most intelligent observation, discernment and discrimination, the most ardent and arduous labor, may be necessary to its acquirement. It is in the attainment of fact that one finds the romance of journalism, the contacts with events and with people that give it its most fascinating experiences, the spice of adventure that appeals to some

of the finest of human qualities, the elation of achievement over dangers and difficulties, though much of it, it is true, is but the drudgery of routine labor. But the fine art of journalism lies in the presentation of the facts, in the preparation of the news for the eye and the interest of the reader.

Two men reporting the same event may so differ in their qualities that the report of one will be dull and unattractive, the report of the other be bright and interesting. The difference may lie in the superior news sense of the latter, the greater ability to recognize and grasp the phases of the event that appeal to human interest in the larger degree, or that merely serve to adorn the salient facts and thereby make them more attractive. But it may lie wholly in the superior power of narration, in the gift of clear, coherent and connected statement, in the better selection and arrangement of words, in the more effective emphasis of the details that impart interest. For, although getting the facts is the primary essential, and often calls for the exercise of intellectual and instinctive qualities of a high order, it is still but the collection of the materials of production, and the value of the materials, in the news sense, depends very largely upon the character of the narrative that is produced from them. And it follows that the value of the newspaper depends no less upon the manner in which it presents the news, upon the degree of the art of expression exercised in the narration of events, upon the interest which that art gives to the news; provided, however, that neither truth nor proportion is sacrificed in the expression.

It is the task of the newspaper to get the news. It is fundamental, first of all, that it get the facts of the news. It is fundamental, second, that it tell the news as interestingly as the circumstances of each event warrant or permit, consistent with the truth. But there is a third fundamental, and that is the judicious selection of the reported news in relation to the available space, the careful discrimination between events, and the adjustment of reports in relation to their importance, the construction of suitable headlines, and the proper arrangement of the news in the printed page, which constitute the final editorial processes in the making of a newspaper. The matters of selection and adjustment have been discussed in previous pages, but these processes are grouped here to bring into view one of the most important fields of journalistic activity, the preparation of the news for the press.

The news may be thoroughly gathered, the facts ascertained and the reports excellently written, but unless copy readers and news editors are competent much of the value of that labor may be lost. To know where, to what extent, and how, to use the "blue pencil," to catch inaccuracies of statement, to discover assertions likely to be libelous, to recognize in an obscure item the possibilities of important news, to discern the relation of a report in hand to events occurring at another place than its source, to grasp at once the import of an item and write a headline that will correctly express that import —all these are tasks that call for the exercise of broad knowledge, intelligence and judgment. To the copy desk comes the news of the world in all its variety of

character and meaning, to be judged upon its merits in relation to the needs and capacity of the particular newspaper. The reports come from hundreds or thousands of sources, the work of many men of many minds and diverse abilities, some of it poorly done and requiring rewriting, some of it profuse and redundant, requiring condensation, some of it of little importance to one section while possibly of great importance to another, some of it calling for expansion with other related facts in the possession of, or obtainable by, the editors. Whatever it is, or wherever it is from, the copy desk is the point where the chaff is winnowed from the wheat and the grain made ready for the readers' daily bread. If there is inadequacy, inefficiency, incompetency at this point the product is defective. No degree of excellence in the reportorial staff, or of editorial direction of that staff, can overcome the handicap of an inefficient or insufficient copy desk.

Nor can accuracy be maintained if accuracy is not demanded at the copy desk with the same degree of insistence as in the reportorial and correspondence departments. Accurate reports may be made inaccurate by incompetent or careless handling in the office. The same sort of workmanship may take the point or interest or vitality out of a good report, or give to a rewritten report aspects quite different from the original. A conservative statement of facts may be made grossly exaggerated, or a well-constructed story robbed of continuity or coherency by injudicious editing. But, on the other hand, a competent copy-handling force promotes accuracy, gives coherency where it is lacking,

strengthens the weak points, corrects errors of diction, often by a deft reconstruction gives life to a dull narrative without sacrifice of truth.

The copy desk is the finishing board, the polishing block, in the process of newspaper making, and the responsibility that rests upon it is very great, for its proper conduct is essential to the making of a good newspaper. And its competent workers fill a high place in the profession of journalism, though they are ever anonymous. They do not have that direct contact with life that gives attraction and often thrill to the task of the news gatherers, but there are compensations in the kaleidoscopic view of varied events that unrolls before them as a continuous moving picture; in the news that passes through their hands, and in the excitement of the sudden "break" of big news of which they are among the first to hear. Nor is there anywhere in journalism more loyalty, more devotion, more intelligence or more knowledge shown than at the copy desk that is properly manned. The desk has its heroes, its geniuses and its artists no less than the field.

In the duties of the copy desk no task is more important than the "building" of headlines. It is an art in itself, one that demands peculiar qualities for its best expression. The headline, in American journalism, has two functions: first, to indicate the nature of the news; second, to draw attention to the news. In the exercise of these functions it serves another purpose, that of denoting to the readers the relative importance or interest, in the judgment of the editor, of the various items presented. Up to the second half of the last cen-

tury the headline in America was nothing more than an indicator, a reticent indicator, of the purport of the matter. A single line was generally considered sufficient for even the most important news. European journalism still holds, as a rule, to this view and practice, though less conservative in its announcements than formerly. The American practice grows out of the urge to awaken interest in the news presented. It aims not only to tell the reader the general subject of the item but to present and to emphasize its leading features. It frequently gives him in effect a concise synopsis of the event with its main details accentuated.

But whatever the merits of the system it creates two serious difficulties. First, the more extensive the headline the greater the possibility of error. No amplification can alter the fundamental fact that the essential purpose of a headline is to tell the reader what the item is about, and it fulfills its purpose only when it indicates to him, clearly and correctly, the nature of the news it heralds. If it does not do this it is not a good headline. But obviously the more a headline is expanded the greater the chance of misstatement and misrepresentation. A four-line head, each line presenting a distinct phase of the item, offers twice as many opportunities for error as a two-line head. The second difficulty is that the desire to attract attention to the item is a constant temptation to an exaggeration of its merits, to make it seem more important than it really is. The headline that does not thunder in the index is an evidence of commendable restraint upon the part of copy reader or editor.

The system has also an unforeseen effect which is not desirable, and which presents a problem of a somewhat serious nature to journalism. The purpose of the headline, as has been said, is to indicate the nature of the item and to arouse interest in it. But the headline too often appears to tell the story, and in itself conveys sufficient information to satisfy the hurried reader. The result is that a great many people get the news from the headline, or think they do, and are content. One of the purposes of the headline is thus defeated. It does not tempt to a perusal of the item, and it makes perusal of any part of it except the head unnecessary for the superficial reader. The effect of this casual skimming of the headlines, so common a practice in America, is not good for journalism, nor is it good for the public. It is not good for journalism because it makes so much of its labor go for naught. The reports of events are written to be read. The time and the labor, the intelligence and skill, applied to the collection of news are expressed in the finished articles that are laid before the reader. In each of them the writer has endeavored to present the collated facts in such detail as to give the reader a clear understanding of what has occurred, or at least of what is known as to the occurrence. But the care for accuracy, for clarity in construction and for effective diction is wasted effort for the reader who finds enough information to satisfy him in the headline.

It is not good for the public because the public value of a newspaper lies in the information it supplies as a foundation for public opinion. If public opinion is to be intelligent it must be founded upon information to

the fullest degree obtainable. The meager knowledge to be drawn from headlines cannot create intelligent opinion. It is not the aim of the headline to supply knowledge but to direct attention to the report which contains the collected information. The headline, however amplified, can but point to the salient facts, and only a few of these. No one can get a clear understanding of an event from a headline, however accurately it may indicate its character. No man can acquire a knowledge of the contents of a book by reading the index. The title and the index can but tell him the nature of the book. The newspaper headlines are but the titles and indexes of the news it contains, and knowledge of public events and movements is not to be acquired from them. But if in the effort to attract attention and arouse interest they tell so much that the reader thinks he has sufficient knowledge of the event without perusal of the matter to which they point, they have failed in their purpose, from the standpoint of journalism, and have deluded him into the belief that he has obtained the news when he has only read an index to the news.

The primary function of the headline, as has been stated, is to indicate the nature of the news. That is a convenience for the reader to which he is entitled. There are few who care to read all that a newspaper contains and such thoroughness of perusal is expected of no one. But by glancing over the headlines one may discover the news that naturally appeals to one's interest and taste, and, if one pleases, ignore all the rest. But if a headline is so constructed as to arouse a justifiable

interest in an item among those readers to whom the subject itself would but slightly appeal, if at all, it has fulfilled its secondary function. It has to that extent enlarged its field of interest; to that extent it has added value to its service. For interest being the essential source of circulation, it is quite important that the interest it arouses be wide as well as deep. The more thoroughly a newspaper is read by the mass of its readers the better it is for the newspaper and the better it is for them—if the news is worth while. Therefore the awakening of a legitimate interest in an item by means of the headline is a proper function. That it is an essential duty of journalism to stimulate public interest in public questions is not to be denied. Indeed much of the public value of journalism is created by the exercise of that duty. And in arousing that public interest the headline may be helpful in no small degree. But the effort to awaken interest in any news by means of the headline must in every case be justified by the nature of the item. To arouse an interest by a headline that is not warranted by the item is to betray the confidence of the reader, to lower his opinion of the editorial judgment and to weaken his respect for the value of all headlines in the paper. There is never any excuse for overstatement or overemphasis in a headline. It gives the reader a false idea of the news if he reads only the headline, and he immediately realizes its exaggerations if he reads the item. In the one case the reader is injured, in the other the newspaper.

For the same reason it is particularly important that the headline be accurate. It is one thing to misrepresent

the news by overemphasis in the headlines, it is another to misrepresent the news by inaccuracies of statement which the most conservative of headlines may contain. Exaggeration is usually, though not always, deliberate. Inaccuracies of statement that are not exaggerations are usually unconscious mistakes, resulting from haste, from lack of understanding of the real import of the item on the part of the copy reader, from lack of care in making the facts in the headline accord with those in the item, or from misuse of words in the headline. It is often the case that a single word wrongly used will give the reader an entirely false conception of the nature of the news. It is not infrequently the case that a headline makes a statement that is absolutely contradicted in the item. Not a few headlines betray the complete ignorance of their writers as to the matter they caption. These are as a rule errors of incompetent, careless or hasty workmanship, committed unconsciously. There is none at the copy desk, or anywhere else, so competent and careful as to be without error, but none the less there is nothing that so reveals the efficiency of a copy staff as the general accuracy of the headlines and their harmony with the news they introduce. The reader is entitled to assume that any headline correctly indicates the nature of the news it heralds, and it is essential to the establishment and maintenance of his respect for the character of the newspaper as a whole that this assumption be constantly justified, as completely as it is humanly possible to justify it. Truth in the headlines is just as important as truth in the news.

The editorial process in the newspaper publication

leads from the headline to the "make-up"—the arrangement of news and other reading matter in the pages. This is something more, indeed much more, than a mechanical task. It is in no small degree the work of an artist, one who has the sense of balance, of proportion and relation that is essential to the architect. It is an editorial task because a knowledge of the nature of the materials and of their comparative importance and value is necessary. It is in this operation that the varied products of journalistic enterprise and labor in numerous fields are assembled and visible form given to that personality which daily meets and greets the reader. To the director of the make-up is intrusted not only the face and dress of the newspaper but its heart and soul wherewith to present to the public a living body whose readers will recognize its identity at a glance and welcome it as a friend. The character of a newspaper, as of a man, is, or should be, deeper than surface appearances, but it is none the less much to be desired that it have a clean and pleasing face and a dress that, like the garb of a gentleman, proclaims his quality without attracting undue attention to itself. All personality is more or less influenced, both subjectively and objectively, by looks. An attractive countenance not only invites acquaintance but may be, without vanity, a source of satisfaction to its possessor. It is, at any rate, an indication of character, and not less so in a newspaper than in a man. And equally is dress an influence in the impression made by personality, and upon the personality itself. "Dress," says an old writer, "has a moral effect upon the conduct of mankind.

Let any gentleman find himself with dirty boots, old surtout, soiled neckcloth, and a general negligence of dress, and he will in all probability find a corresponding disposition to negligence of address." The truth of this is apparent to all, and so too is the contrary fact that clean raiment is a mighty help toward clean conduct. A well-dressed newspaper, one, that is to say, whose appearance is clean and attractive to the eye, is not only a constant pleasure to those who read it but a constant inspiration to those who serve, however humbly, in its creation.

But the make-up involves not only the general appearance of the paper, but the arrangement of the news to suit the convenience of the reader and the display of news for the promotion of sales. One of the values of newspaper acquaintance is the familiarity of the reader with its customary arrangement of the news. He knows where to find what he particularly wants and the knowledge is one of the influences that hold his allegiance to the paper which he favors. The selling function of the make-up is limited almost wholly to street sales, and, in its application, to the first page. This page may, indeed, be termed the show window of the newspaper. Here it exposes to view its most attractive goods, its most important, or most interesting, news. To choose from the events of the day those which should merit the greatest attention or arouse the greatest interest, is the task of the director of the make-up, and this involves a quick and accurate judgment of news values and of the tastes of the readers. The first page, therefore, is at once a test of editorial judgment and a test of the edi-

torial artist, in the quality of the news selected and in the arrangement of the news to please the eye of the regular reader, as well as to attract the attention and immediate interest of all who are possible buyers. This last is of more importance to the afternoon paper than to the morning paper, as the former ordinarily derives more of its circulation from street sales because the time of its publication is more favorable for such sales. The afternoon paper, therefore, places more emphasis upon its first-page features, cries its wares somewhat louder, as a rule, than the morning paper, but in both the aspect of the first page has an influence upon sales.

There are thus several considerations involved in the make-up of the first page and not infrequently they conflict. If that page is regarded as the face of the paper it is highly important that its appearance be respectable if the paper as a whole is to inspire respect. Its countenance should express character, and there is, indeed, no better selling quality for a newspaper or a man than character revealed in the face. It is an influence that establishes permanent relations, if the body and soul prove that the countenance has not lied. This view of the function of the first page makes the impress of its general appearance the first consideration. It aims to attract constantly, by a well-balanced arrangement of news that gives a pleasing effect to the whole page regardless of the quality of the news it contains. It is essential, of course, that the quality justify the appearance, but there is no little value in the impression made by the mere looks of the first page of a newspaper made up on that principle. One likes to read a news-

paper whose face looks intelligent, friendly and clean, and one is likely to stand by such a newspaper when it is found that its looks are not deceiving.

If, however, the first page is regarded primarily as a show window; if, that is to say, the commercial influence predominates in the make-up, then the arrangement of the first page for sales purposes is the first consideration. This theory of the function of the first page is incompatible with the other. It is not mainly concerned with impressing its character upon the reader but with extracting pennies from his pocket. Character it may have, but the make-up is at no pains to reveal it. The make-up, on the contrary, labors to assemble the most startling items under the most startling heads, and character, if it exists, is concealed or misrepresented by the countenance. In the effort to increase street sales by striking the eye with sensational appeal, good appearance is sacrificed to immediate effect upon the beholder. That sales are made by this is not to be doubted, but the standpoint is not an elevated one, and the practice tends to promote exaggerations in headlines and in the news that in turn tend to lower the public confidence in the reliability of journalism generally.

If, however, selling appeal is a secondary rather than a primary consideration in the make-up, the show-window idea need not be inconsistent with the idea of character expression. For a show window may be in itself both an affirmative expression of character and an inspiration to confidence as well as to sales. To realize the truth of this it is only necessary to consider the development of the mercantile show window. It was at

first, and for a long period, merely a place to display the nature and variety of goods for sale within. The custom was to crowd as much into the window as it would hold. Little attention was given to arrangement and so much was placed within the space that the mass impression was a collection of junk whose details were virtually lost unless time was given to inspection. There was little to attract or to please the eye in such a show window and nothing to create respect for the institution responsible for it. It has largely disappeared with a better understanding of the psychology of salesmanship, and is to be found only in back streets or in backward communities where merchandising methods are primitive. But this type of show window is presented in the first pages of many newspapers, whose practice it is to pack as many items as possible into that page, each with a bold heading designed to convey the idea that it is important. The mass effect is confusion rather than attention. The selling influence is thereby diminished, if not lost, because no particular detail in such an assemblage can be impressed upon the eye with the force that is possible when a fact that is really impressive is presented in a way to make it stand out, separate and distinct, even as a great tree challenges attention when standing alone but is unobserved in a forest.

So, with a clear understanding of this, the modern mercantile show window displays a few things so attractively that detail is emphasized to the eye, and the selling appeal thereby materially strengthened, while the composition as a whole is pleasing to the taste and inspires respect for the institution responsible for it.

The character of the institution, in short, is indicated to a degree by the character of the display, which at the same time promotes sales. It has been said frequently in this discussion of journalistic principles that the first essential of a newspaper is that it be salable. Therefore, any honest device that tends to increase sales without lowering the newspaper in public esteem and confidence is to be considered as a legitimate contributor to that essential. From this viewpoint the show-window theory of the function of the first page is not to be condemned if it is made subordinate to the impress of character on the eye of the observer, the impress which alone can create and maintain continuous favor and faith in the mind of the reader. Any fine window display of a mercantile establishment is a lesson in the fundamental principles of first-page arrangement. Therein is shown the same judicious selection of items most likely to appeal to public interest, the same balance and artistic grouping, and the same avoidance of crowding, that are the primary qualities of a first page that combines good taste, dignity and character with a strong and continuous selling appeal.

CHAPTER VIII

PERSONALITY IN THE NEWSPAPER

It was said at the beginning of this discussion that news and views constituted journalism. News alone is but one of the two functions of journalism. Views alone lack the primary element on which journalism is founded. A newspaper without opinions or a periodical without news may be accepted as within the field of journalism but neither can be said to cover that field. Opinion, as has been shown, is a constant associate of news. Whenever and wherever news of interest is imparted it stimulates thought, if the mind is capable of thought, and the resulting expression of opinion, if the time and opportunity for expression are present. Give out a bit of news to any group of men, or women, and if it interests them a discussion will follow, and varied views of its nature or import will be voiced. Moreover, if the news is important and the one who bears it commands respect, his opinion of its meaning will be desired. He will not only be questioned for details but will be asked what he thinks about it. In the communication of events between men news and views are inseparable and they have always been so.

Journalism, being a product of the interest in events which is characteristic of all humanity, is incomplete unless it combines both information and opinion in the

service it renders in response to that interest, for both are essential to its satisfaction. This has been recognized almost from the beginning of journalism, though for a long time the dissemination of opinion in connection with the news was repressed by authority, and it was not until the battle of the press for the freedom of expression was won that public opinion began to develop the power which has since made it the controlling influence in the progress of mankind.

A newspaper without opinion is at the best but a purveyor of current information. It creates a merchandise of events which it presents for sale in the public market. Great as is the importance of the public service thereby rendered, and fundamental as it is as a function of journalism, it is none the less true that it is essentially commercial in its nature. The newspaper so limited is simply a commodity, an insensate product of a manufacturing process the raw materials for which are drawn from the ends of the earth. It may, like the phonograph or the radio, collect and disseminate thought as well as information, but having no thought of its own it is without inherent vitality. It is thought and the expression of thought that breathes the spirit of life into a newspaper, that makes of it a living, moving, speaking entity, with a mind and a will and a purpose, a personality in every sense of the word.

Personality is as essential to the newspaper as it is to a man. Man cannot escape it. No man, however colorless, is without it. It is, indeed, himself, the identity of which he is conscious and which distinguishes him from others. It is not a superficial quality resting

in face or form though face and form contribute to its revealment. It is something within, which thinks and wills and prompts to action, and though we may identify a man to the eye by his physical appearance, we do not and cannot know him save as he gives expression to that which is within him by speech or conduct, save as he somehow reveals his thought. The countenance, the manner, the dress, do not constitute personality. They are but outward indications of the inner self, which alone is personality.

So it is with the newspaper. It is not possible to create a personality out of merchandise. The newspaper, like any other product, may be identified by its appearance. Its face and dress, the character and arrangement of its news, may, it is true, indicate personality, but they cannot constitute personality. It is only thought and the expression of thought in the editorial columns of the paper that reveal the existence of a mind and a soul within it, without which there is no such thing as personality anywhere. The news may be said to compose the body of the newspaper, that part of it which shows to the eye lineaments, form and garments, but the editorial page is its soul. If the soul is not there the body is but a lay figure.

And this personality, this mind-encompassing soul, inevitably reveals its quality to the eye, the ear and the understanding by its constant self-expression. In revealing its thought the newspaper reveals its character and its intellectual capacity. Whatever may be the surface indications of its countenance it is the editorial page that shows what it really is. Many a man has a

weak and cowardly soul beneath an imposing exterior, and a powerful mind often exists within a fragile body. Surface appearances may or may not be misleading. But whatever the exterior the personality within discloses itself through its own expression. It is the same with the newspaper. It presents itself for public inspection daily. Its face and dress may indicate character or the lack of it, but the real test of its character, the actual revelation of its personality, is to be found only in the expression of its own thought.

Superficially the newspapers have perhaps lost something in the way of individual distinctiveness. To a large extent they present much the same news in virtually the same form. Typographical differences, though always existing, are somewhat less marked than in the past. The great development of general news-collecting agencies supplying identical matter to numerous papers contributes to uniformity of content. The growth of syndicate service is an important influence to the same effect. This, however, is the usual and almost inevitable result of large production in any field of manufacture. Both the process and the product of the process tend to certain uniformity, to become more or less standardized along particular lines. This is due to improvement of methods or design whereby a better product may be obtained, whereby the cost of production may be lessened, or whereby volume of production may be largely increased. The first automobiles, for example, varied greatly in appearance and in mechanical device. Gradually, however, as experience established definite principles of construction they began to assume a rela-

tive uniformity of mechanism and design until distinction became rather a matter of quality than appearance, though enough differences of appearance have been maintained to permit ready identification. But this approach to uniformity increased the value of the product as an instrument of service and facilitated its larger distribution.

The influences that have contributed to a similar trend in newspaper production have enlarged its sphere of usefulness, have increased the facilities of manufacture and the field of circulation, and have given to the newspapers and therefore to their readers a larger news service than any individual newspaper, with perhaps a few exceptions, could otherwise obtain. That they have tended to establish some uniformity of appearance is not to be unduly deplored in the face of these facts. Distinctiveness or individuality in a newspaper is not a matter of aspect. Personality alone gives distinction to a newspaper, and although personality may be indicated by appearance it is not in the appearance that it exists. All men are much alike. They have the same form. All, with some unfortunate exceptions, have the same number of arms and legs, attached to the body in the same thoroughly standardized way. The features of all are "made up," to use the newspaper term, according to a fixed and virtually invariable rule of place and balance. Even in dress, a matter that is subject to his will, there is comparative uniformity. Yet who will undertake to say that individual distinctiveness is any the less apparent? There are enough differences of form and aspect among men for the pur-

pose of identification, and that is all that is externally necessary. It is the soul and mind within, the personality revealed in thought and word and conduct, that in reality distinguishes one man from another. And so it is with the newspaper. Influences that tend to uniformity can never go so far as to make all newspapers exactly alike. There are and will always be differences in appearance sufficient for the purpose of identification, differences in quality, manner and conduct that reflect in some degree the personality, differences in the form and direction of individual initiative which no trend toward superficial similarity can entirely remove.

But while these influences have been at work in the progressive development of the newspaper in its physical aspect, these and others have effected a change in its inner self. It has become more and more of an entity, more and more of a living being; having its own rather than a borrowed vitality. We often speak of the passing of personal journalism, sometimes with an air of regret. That personal journalism had its values and attractions is not to be questioned. But the newspapers in that day were not, and could not be, personalities in themselves. Each was but a medium of expression for the human personality directing it. It registered what Greeley said, or what Dana said. It was the man who spoke, not the newspaper, and the man rather than the paper impressed the public mind. Personality was no more embodied in a newspaper than in a book or a pamphlet.

But as newspapers have developed in size and cir-

culation, as their fields and activities have increased, they have of necessity become institutional, and individual human personality has given place to a composite personality which rests within the newspaper itself. People no longer speak of what Greeley or Dana or Raymond said, but of what the *Tribune,* the *Sun* or the *Times* says. For it is no longer a man who speaks. It is the voice of the paper that is impressed upon the public mind, revealing its own thought, its own character, its own personality. It is no longer a mere insensate instrument of expression, it has in effect become a self-conscious, self-expressive ego, a living being that is respected and loved, hated and feared, regarded with contempt or with admiration, according to the nature of the personality it discloses and its impress upon the individual mind.

And this personality, resting within the newspaper itself, rather than within any individual man, acquires, or may acquire, a larger, deeper and more pervasive influence upon public opinion than it could ordinarily obtain as the mere medium of individual expression. There is something about this institutional personality that gives its thought and its utterance a weight and impressiveness that no person who contributes to that utterance can give to his own words as an individual opinion. John Jones, the editor of the *Eagle,* is no oracle among his acquaintances. His views, personally imparted to them, are received with no more attention than is paid to those of others among them. His intelligence, his knowledge, may be respected, but he is John Jones, one of themselves. But when the *Eagle* speaks

the effect is different. It may be that it expresses the same opinion that Jones has given to them personally, and they may know that it is in reality the voice of Jones, but they are seldom, if ever, conscious of Jones when they read. It is the *Eagle,* the newspaper, that now speaks to them, expressing a personality of its own, making an impress of its own, exercising an influence of its own, as a distinct entity; and that personality, if worthy of respect, is respected as Jones could never be, and its opinions accepted as conclusive when those of Jones personally would not be. Jones, indeed, may pass, giving way to Smith, and Smith in turn to Brown, without affecting the personality of the *Eagle* which seems undisturbed by human mutations, unmoved by the incidents of death. Constantly renewing its vitality with fresh blood it holds the possibilities of immortality within itself and need succumb to nothing so long as that blood is untainted and kept red with corpuscles of abounding life.

CHAPTER IX

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

THERE is, then, such a thing as personality in the newspaper, a living entity that exists quite apart from the human personalities that sustain it. It cannot, of course, be independent of them. It draws its life from them, even as every man draws the means of subsistence from others, but it is none the less a living being, with a body, mind and soul of its own. And the editorial page is the tongue which expresses the thought of this personality and thereby reveals its character, its conscience and the measure of its intelligence.

With this conception of the newspaper the editorial page cannot be regarded as a mere "feature," an incident of journalism, whose value or importance is open to question, something which may be neglected or even dispensed with. It is, on the contrary, essential to the functioning of journalism, in the complete sense, essential to the expression of that personality which, without expression can hardly be said to exist, and which alone, by its expression, can give distinctiveness and vital individuality to a newspaper. It is here that it discloses its personality. It is here that it reveals what it thinks about things, and in the revelation exposes its intellectual capacity, its standards of right and wrong, the quality of its judgment, its likes and dislikes, its preju-

dices and passions, its sentiments and its aspirations, its sincerity or hypocrisy, reveals, in short, its own character. It is here that it speaks to the public in its own voice, preaching, propounding, interpreting, advocating, condemning, utilizing that audience which it acquires primarily by the dissemination of news to spread knowledge of the meaning of public events, to arouse and maintain interest in public affairs, to promote activities for the public welfare and to defend principles of public and private righteousness. It is here that it makes its personality felt in its impress upon public opinion, and renders that service to the people, to liberty, democracy and civilization which is the primary reason for its constitutional protection.

This being true the character and quality of the editorial page is a matter of the first importance in journalism. The personality it reveals must be one that justifies a measure of public respect and public confidence if the newspaper as a whole is to be fixed firmly in public esteem and public support. It would be far from the truth, however, to assert that the value of the newspaper is measured by its editorial page. People as a rule do not buy a newspaper for its editorials, however high their quality. There are exceptional newspapers whose editorials form the chief attraction to the larger number of their readers, but such cases are rare and when they exist there is something lacking in the balance between news and editorials. There are people, many of them, to whom the editorial page of any paper, if it is a good one, has first place in their interest, but they are in the minority. Generally

speaking people buy a newspaper for the news, interest in opinion being secondary. And this is the natural and fundamental order of precedence. Events necessarily precede the study of events. There must, that is to say, be an occurrence before there can be any opinion about the occurrence. There must be a condition to arouse thought before there can be any occasion for the expression of thought. Our first concern as human beings is in events, in what is going on—in the news. The primary function of a newspaper is to present the news, and primarily it is to obtain the news that people buy it. In a very large degree, therefore, they measure the value of the paper by the extent and quality of its news service.

But interest in the news stimulates thought about the news and the reader who seeks an understanding of the meaning and import of events turns to the editorial page for such enlightenment as he may find there. And in so doing he turns from consideration of a product to a direct communion with a personality that is the spirit within the product. He realizes that the news he has been reading, whatever its value as information, is but a statement of facts, a record of current events. But that which he reads, when he refers to the editorial page, is an expression of thought from a living personality, one that talks to him daily from this page, one that he feels he knows though he may never attempt to visualize it, and for which he may acquire, through that continuous communion, a respect and attachment that are the foundations of loyal support. Such feelings are not, and cannot be, created by news, by records

of events. There is nothing in a page of current chronicles to inspire affection for the paper on which it is printed or for the publication of which it is a part. The manner of its presentation may be pleasing to the eye, the customary truthfulness of the record may develop a confidence in its accuracy and it may be highly valued for its general trustworthiness. But these are the impressions of the inanimate, such as may be made by any worthy product. From the editorial page, on the other hand, a personality speaks, and the sentiments it arouses are personal in their nature, the sentiments of the heart and mind that are created and actuated by personal relations. Happy and fortunate is the newspaper with a personality that inspires and justifies the esteem, the trust and the affection of its readers. It is to them more than a sheet of paper; it is an intimate friend, a trusted counselor.

But how is that confidence and attachment to be won? Manifestly by the revelation of the same qualities that inspire confidence and attachment in all personal relations—integrity, sincerity, intelligence, humanity. There is no essential difference between character in a newspaper and character in a man. Newspaper personality is, indeed, but an embodiment of human qualities within paper instead of flesh. It is of necessity created out of human personality, composite though it be, and inevitably takes the form and character of the human attributes, good or bad, or good and bad, which enter into it. It is, moreover, subject to the ordinary human limitations. However it tries it cannot be inerrant or infallible, nor can it maintain

itself in the rarefied atmosphere above the human level. It is of mankind and inevitably presents the variations of weakness and of strength to which mankind, even at its best, is subject.

We do not ask nor expect perfection in our friends or in those to whom we look for counsel, and we have no right to ask it or expect it in the newspaper to which we give our friendship and support. But we do ask and expect of friend or counselor that he be true, that he be faithful, that he be dependable, that he be honest; and we have a right to ask and expect of the newspaper personality with which we daily commune that it have, within its human limitations, the same qualities of heart and mind. It is but necessary to think of the newspaper as in effect a human being in order to understand the qualities it must have if it is to obtain and maintain public appreciation and confidence. And the vocal organ of this being, the instrument with which it makes these qualities known, is the editorial page. Therefore, the newspaper, in its editorial columns, is not merely presenting something to read, not merely furnishing comment on events, not merely interpreting the news, not merely expressing or guiding public opinion; it is revealing its own mind and soul, its own intelligence, its own conscience, its own standards of right and wrong.

All of this argument leads to the assertion that the primary and fundamental function of the editorial page is self-expression; not, let it be understood, the self-expression of any individual contributing to the page, but the self-expression of the living entity that is embodied within the newspaper. The editorials may be

the product of one person or of a number of persons; they may present the opinions of one man or the conclusions of a conference of editors; but it remains true none the less that whatever is said, or by whomsoever written, becomes the thought of the newspaper when it is printed. The reader as a rule does not know from what individual pen an editorial comes, or by what joint and concurrent cerebration its conclusions may have been reached. If he does happen to know he rarely thinks of the connection. It is to him not the voice of any man or any group of men, but the voice of the newspaper, and that, indeed, is what it is in reality. It is no illusion. And this voice, if it has merited his respect and confidence, impresses him, as the spoken voice of no individual contributing to its editorial columns in his own personality can ever do. It is not that it is anonymous. Anonymity in fact lowers the weight of any utterance. In reality it is not anonymous. It is the *Sun* that speaks and as the voice of the *Sun* it is recognized by the reader.

In the production of the editorial page, therefore, there is involved, as the primary task, the creation and maintenance of a personality that will speak with the voice of the newspaper, that will express the consciousness and the conscience of the newspaper, and that will reveal a character worthy of the respect and the confidence of the readers. The breath of life must be breathed into it that it become a living soul. How is it to be accomplished? By no tricks of artifice or of legerdemain; only by putting into it the best that is in its creators. And if the character of the newspaper

personality is to be made one that is worthy of public respect it is essential that there be the qualities of such personality in those to whom the task of creation is intrusted. No man can put into an editorial page what he himself does not possess. He may, to be sure, often preach what he fails to practice. In that more or less frequent failing all humanity is akin. But unless the editor has a mind and a conscience, unless he himself has intelligence, judgment, truth and sincerity, which are the fundamental requisites of character, he cannot put these qualities into the newspaper; and only to the extent of his possession of them can he impart them to that other personality for which he is responsible. Whatever he lacks in these qualities is bound to be revealed more or less clearly in the page he directs. He can through this channel make the paper greater than himself, because of the larger sweep of its personality, but it cannot escape from the limitations of its maker.

It follows, therefore, that the higher the character of the editor and the editorial staff in charge of the editorial page the higher will be the character of the newspaper personality which they create and sustain, and the greater will be the respect which it commands, provided, of course, that they are so earnestly devoted to the task that they put the best of themselves, the best of which they are capable, into the creation. It follows also that the editorial page is no place for the novice in journalism, nor for the superficial application of talents however experienced. Its direction is not to be safely entrusted to one lacking maturity of mind or of judgment, which, however, by no means implies gray

hairs, nor to one lacking in broad knowledge of public affairs or a comprehension of the obligations of journalism in its relation to public affairs. The direction of the editorial page of a newspaper is a serious task, an office of the highest responsibility, not only to the newspaper service but to the public, and the character and qualities applied to it should be the highest obtainable.

CHAPTER X

EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITY

It is essential to the development of the individual newspaper, and the profession of journalism generally, that editorial responsibility to the public be recognized and realized by editors, particularly those in charge of or contributing to editorial pages. This assertion does not mean that the sense of responsibility should be a heavy burden on the mind or the conscience. The man upon whose shoulders it weighs painfully is out of place in the editorial chair. Rather should it be accepted as a privilege and a joy, an opportunity for service and for accomplishment. But whatever the feeling as to the responsibility, it must be realized if the newspaper is to serve worthily, if it is to fulfill its function either in the guidance or reflection of public opinion, and if the newspaper man himself is to give to the paper and to the people the best that is in him.

For the editorial office is essentially a public office, though the public may never see or know the editor. Daily he speaks to the public in regard to matters that are of public concern. And he speaks not to a few hundred and but now and then, as does the preacher, the lecturer or the politician, but to thousands and even to hundreds of thousands every day throughout the year.

His hearers are not limited, as theirs are, to those who can get within the sound of his voice. There are no limitations upon the reach and pervasiveness of his speech save the extent and the spread of the circulation of his newspaper, and even that is not a boundary, for every newspaper has many readers that are not numbered among its subscribers, and in particular instances what it says is often reprinted by other newspapers thereby reaching other and more distant circles. The editor, therefore, addresses a greater audience than is possible for any other public speaker and he speaks to his audience daily. Moreover, he speaks far more directly and intimately, for he enters the homes, sits by the fireside, as it were, and talks perhaps to the whole family. He goes into the offices and the places of business and addresses the merchant, the manufacturer, the banker, the salesman, the clerks and the industrial workers. He goes into the country and talks to the farmer. Every street car and every passenger coach feels his presence. Wherever there is a man or a woman, no matter how far retreated, there he may find a hearer. The ubiquity, the pervasiveness, the continuity and the persistency of the newspaper voice give it the means of an influence attainable by no other agency in the creation, guidance or expression of public opinion or public sentiment.

"In this and like communities," said Abraham Lincoln, "public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail, without it nothing can succeed. Consequently he who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces

decisions." Lincoln was careful in his choice of words, and it is to be presumed that he used the term "public sentiment" deliberately as a broader or more comprehensive term than "public opinion." Opinion, as Webster defines it, is an intellectual judgment. Sentiment includes opinion and feeling or emotion, whether the one or the other preponderates. "The word sentiment, agreeably to the use made of it by our best English writers," says Dugald Stewart, as quoted by Webster, "expresses in my own opinion, very happily, those complex determinations of the mind which result from the coöperation of our rational powers and of our moral feelings." Sentiment, that is to say, is, in this sense, a combined product of the mind and the heart, and it is probably true that what is ordinarily, almost universally, called public opinion is in reality public sentiment, something that partakes of feeling as well as thought.

But however that may be, whether we term it opinion or sentiment, it is undeniable that in the modern world it is the most potent of influences, and he who molds it, in whatever degree, is invested with a privilege and a responsibility. That the press has a large influence in molding public opinion is not to be questioned. That it has a larger influence than any other agency may be asserted without much fear of successful contradiction. And this not because it is endowed with superior intelligence or prescience—often, indeed, it is unhappily inferior in these qualities—but because it gives continuous and persistent publicity to events and to thought-about events. The news itself is an important,

a fundamental, factor in the creation of public opinion. It is upon this that virtually all opinion as to current affairs is founded. But people as a rule have little time or inclination to analyze or to study events, to seek for themselves an understanding of their import or relation. Each man and each woman, speaking generally, is too deeply absorbed in his or her occupation or individual interests, to devote much thought or attention to the personal interpretation of public events. The opinions of those who have taken time to study them, to think about them and to express their thoughts, are likely to be accepted, if they do no violence to individual prejudices or to one's inherent sense of rationality. And this is particularly true if the source of the opinions has become a customary source of reliance, whether through mere habit or through a developed respect for its judgment.

So it is that the newspaper, expressing its thought daily through its editorial page, exercises a constant influence upon the opinion of its readers, whether they are conscious of it or not. "The press," says Charles A. Dana, "is a powerful agent. It takes men when their information is not complete, when their reasoning has not yet been worked out, when their opinions are not yet fixed, and it suggests and intimates and insinuates an opinion and a judgment which oftentimes the man, unless he is a man of great intelligence and force of character, adopts as something established and concluded. It is a power and influence which is exercised over the minds of the people, often without any knowledge or any criticism on the part of the person

who is subject to it. In that way there is a real and remarkable power of the press, and it is a power that inspires me always with a very solemn sense of responsibility. Here you take the mind of a man, and, without his knowing it, you shape it, you direct it, you send him along a road which he does not know, and, very often, which you do not know."

Such a power as this is not one to be used carelessly. The possession of it lays upon the press a very great obligation that cannot be fulfilled unless the responsibility is realized and earnest effort made to exercise it for the public good. It is an obligation that rests upon all newspaper ownership and direction, but particularly upon the editor or editors who are entrusted with the task of expressing the thought of the newspaper. The fact that the editor never sees, and rarely hears directly from, his audience, prevents him often from realizing that he is actually addressing an audience, perhaps a vast one. He is then apt to regard his task merely as one requiring the preparation of a certain amount of copy to fill a certain amount of space; so many words and the day is done, also his duty. That attitude is not incompatible with a sense of obligation to his newspaper to fill his allotted space with something worth reading, but it is incompatible with a sense of responsibility to the unseen audience which he is in fact addressing, and unless that responsibility is realized he cannot do his duty to the public which his newspaper serves, nor, for that very reason, can he do his full duty to the newspaper itself. For it is only as the newspaper serves the public that it can serve itself, and it cannot

render the best service either to the public or to itself unless it recognizes this fact and keeps it in mind.

Every editorial is an address or a statement to the public. Any man who makes a speech understands that his audience measures his intelligence, and perhaps his character, by what he says. Certainly if he speaks with some frequency both character and intelligence will be estimated from his utterances. Knowing this he will, if he has the opportunity, prepare himself with some care, study his subject and arrange his thoughts, so as to make the best impression he can upon his hearers. He will have his audience before him, and usually he may discern some indications of the effect upon it of his words and his personality. The editor cannot see his audience and rarely has he any sign of the immediate effect of his words. But none the less he is a speaker addressing an audience, a much larger one than any man can reach with vocal speech, and the intelligence, the character, the general personality of the newspaper will be measured in the main by what he says from day to day. It is important, therefore, that he likewise consider his subject, in each instance, with as much care as the circumstances of time permit, if he is to create, maintain or enhance for his newspaper a reputation to justify public confidence and respect.

This is his duty to the paper, for the interests of the paper, but he cannot perform that duty, as has been said, unless he realizes that he is not talking to himself, not merely filling a certain space with words, but is speaking to a public, to which he and his paper owe a real and definite responsibility for the character, pur-

port and import of his words. That responsibility is all the greater because it involves a power and influence over the minds of the people which is often exercised, as Dana says, "without any knowledge or any criticism on the part of the person subject to it." Few readers are conscious of the extent to which the newspaper molds their sentiments. Day after day they read what their paper has to say on public questions, if what it says is worth reading, and unless its opinions on a given question arouse antagonism because it conflicts with their prejudices, traditions or judgment, they accept them as their own. Many, of course, those who give real thought to the meaning of events and are accustomed to forming their own conclusions, weigh the newspaper expression as they would any other, and accept or reject its opinions upon their own judgment of their merits, but these are in the minority. They constitute, however, the element of the population having the largest influence upon public opinion, and the highest test of the intelligence, accuracy and soundness of newspaper thought is the approval and support of this element. But they, being able and disposed to judge for themselves, are not such a charge upon newspaper responsibility as that great majority which is too deeply absorbed in individual vocation and interest, or is too indifferent, to give much thought to the import of events or to the personal development of opinion through its own intellectual processes. That does not mean that this majority lacks in intelligence. Much of it does, to be sure, but it includes a great many of a high order of intelligence who limit their thinking

to matters of direct personal concern, and customarily, though perhaps unconsciously, take their opinions ready made from external sources of thought, particularly and mainly the daily newspaper.

This being true the newspaper cannot afford, either from the material or the moral standpoint, to trifle with the power that lies in its hands in the expression of its thoughts. To be content with superficial comment, with unconsidered opinions, with poorly digested facts, is a dereliction of duty and a betrayal of trust. Every reader of a newspaper should be justified in feeling that the views presented to him in its editorial columns are founded upon the best information accessible at the moment, and are the sincere product of the best thought of which the editor or the editorial staff is capable. This refers particularly, of course, to the discussion of the things that matter, the things that affect or may affect the public attitude toward public questions, whether local or general. There is much editorial that has no such bearing, that is not likely to influence public opinion one way or another, that treats subjects of more or less interest but which are of no, or of relatively little, importance in the molding of public sentiment. It is the "small talk" so to speak, of editorial expression, and it is valuable in itself not only in adding attractiveness to the editorial page, but in revealing qualities of the newspaper personality that make it more humanly companionable. The editorial page is defective without it, and the better it is done the better for the paper.

But this is not the character of editorial expression in which the public responsibility lies that is here under

discussion. It is in the treatment of matters of public concern, the questions of the day that affect or may affect the public interest, the current events that have a bearing upon public welfare, that the newspaper exercises the trust imposed upon it, and in the manner of its exercise reveals its sense of that responsibility, and no less its capacity to fulfill its obligation to the public. The highest and greatest test of the newspaper is in the extent and character of the influence it brings to bear upon society, and that test applies collectively to the whole profession of journalism.

CHAPTER XI

THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

But there is another phase of editorial responsibility that involves obligations to the public no less serious, and it lies in what is termed the freedom of the press. That freedom is one of the inherent rights of civil liberty and its maintenance is vital to human welfare. To maintain it to the highest degree compatible with the safety of society is a solemn duty of journalism, not only for itself but for the people; less, indeed, for itself than for the people. For its exercise is essential to the public interest, essential to the security and progress of democratic institutions, essential to the preservation of all the other liberties that constitute the most prized possessions of humanity. These liberties, where they exist, have been acquired only after ages of struggle, and such are the destructive forces of human propensities that they can be kept only by maintaining a firm hold upon them. In retaining liberty once acquired, as in securing it in the first instance, no influence is so powerful as that of a free press.

This is universally admitted, and in America it has been so fully recognized from the beginning that the freedom of the press is given the sanction and protection of the Constitution, which declares that it cannot be abridged. The press is the only private institution that

is so shielded by the mandate of that fundamental law, and this was due not to any desire to confer a special privilege upon the press for its own benefit, but for the sole purpose of protecting the rights and liberties of the people. "During the revolutionary epoch," says Cooley,[1] "the press had been the chief means of disseminating free principles among the people and in preparing the country to resist oppression, and its powers for good in this direction had appeared so great as to cast its other benefits into the shade. It is a just conclusion, therefore, that this freedom of public discussion was meant to be fully preserved; and that the prohibition of laws impairing it was aimed, not merely at a censorship of the press, but more particularly at any restrictive laws or administration of law whereby such free and general discussion of public interests and affairs as had become customary in America should be so abridged as to deprive it of its advantages as an aid to the people in exercising intelligently their privileges as citizens, and in protecting their liberties."

The freedom of the press, let it be repeated, is commanded and guaranteed by the American Constitution, not as a measure for the protection of a private interest but as a measure for the protection of the people in the preservation of their liberties. It is a right, that is to say, which is recognized, authorized and guarded by the fundamental law, not for the emolument or aggrandizement of the press, but to be exercised by it for the benefit of the people. The very nature of this right makes any limitation of its exercise a paradox

[1] *Constitutional Law.*

unless the limitation is in itself essential to the protection of society. There are some, indeed, who hold that any limitation whatsoever is a violation of the right. But if that were true of this form of civil liberty it would be true of all forms, and it is the common experience of mankind that civil liberty of any sort can be maintained only in the degree in which its exercise is for the general good. Liberty unless united with law inevitably destroys itself. "To imagine liberty without a law," as Clarendon says, "is to imagine every man with his sword in his hand to destroy him who is weaker than himself." That does not mean the law of statutory enactment simply, but the law of custom, of reason and conscience, that society has in all times enacted for self-protection from liberty unrestrained. "I should wish to act, no doubt, in every instance as I pleased," says Paley, "but I reflect that the rest of mankind also would then do the same; to which state of universal independence and self-direction I should meet with so many checks and obstacles to my own will, from the opposition and interference of other men's, that not only my happiness but my liberty would be less than whilst the whole community were subject to the domination of equal laws."

The freedom of the press, as any other form of liberty, is subject to such restraints as are necessary for the preservation of other rights, subject to restraints upon the abuse of liberty. The press must recognize the fact that there are other rights than this and that these other rights must be respected if its own right is to preserve that public sanction which placed the protection of the

Constitution around it. "The freedom of the press," says Cooley again, "may be defined to be the liberty to utter and publish whatever the citizen may choose, and to be protected against legal censure and punishment in so doing, provided the publication is not so far injurious to public morals or to private reputation as to be condemned by the common law standards by which defamatory publications were judged when this freedom was thus made a constitutional right." The right goes farther than that, for the principle that the truth is no libel was not then established. But none the less the limitation on the exercise of the right as to defamatory publication obtains in principle and in law, and there are other restrictions of a similar nature that are accepted as compatible with the public interest without improper restraint of this freedom.

Statutory law, however, does not cover all the restraints that are laid upon journalism by a sense of decency, fairness and right. The very fact that the freedom of the press is so guarded by the Constitution and so little restrained by law throws upon the press as an agency of public welfare an obligation to exercise that liberty, wisely, fairly, righteously and for the public good. "The liberty of the press," said Alexander Hamilton, "consists, in my idea, in publishing the truth, from good motives and for justifiable ends, though it reflects upon the government, on magistrates, on individuals. If it be not allowed it excludes the privilege of canvassing men, and our rulers." Therein is stated the principle, and the proper rule of practice, in the exercise of the freedom of the press. To justify that

freedom it is essential to publish the truth, or what one sincerely believes to be the truth. The difficulties that surround the ascertainment of truth in the news have been fully discussed in this volume, and inasmuch as editorial opinions are founded largely upon the news the same difficulties are encountered in editorial expression. But in such expression truth can be and should be sought with more care than is practicable in the publication of news, for the editorial writer has usually more time to sift the evidence, and because he is expressing the thought and the personality of the newspaper itself, by which its character is to be estimated, he has a larger responsibility for the discernment and publication of truth, both for the welfare of his journal and the welfare of the public.

But in the exercise of that freedom in the expression of opinion it is not sufficient that the truth be stated. It should be "from good motives and for justifiable ends." These motives and ends are implied and assumed in all discussion of the acts of public men, or the acts of any men in relation to public affairs. But it is important to the standing of each individual newspaper and to the standing of journalism generally that these assumptions be justified by the sincerity of the discussion. Within the truth there can be no proper limitations by law of the right of such discussion other than the restraints already mentioned and a possible reservation for acute emergencies presently to be stated. To put any other limit upon the expression of opinion is to endanger not only that liberty but all liberty. "No one," says Justice Story, "can doubt the importance,

in a free government, of the rights to canvass the acts of public men and the tendency of public measures, to censure boldly the conduct of rulers and to scrutinize closely the policy and plans of the government. This is the great security of a free government. If we would preserve it public opinion must be enlightened, political vigilance must be inculcated, free, but not licentious discussion, must be encouraged." Free discussion is essential to a free government, but licentious discussion is an abuse of the privilege which lowers its standards, weakens its influence and imperils its security. It can never be warranted by "good motives" and "justifiable ends," and it is to the honor of journalism that it has recognized this and has gradually and voluntarily abandoned in a large degree the scurrility which so often characterized its discussions in past days. Yet it should never be forgotten that the right of free speech, however unlimited, is a sacred privilege that in itself confers an obligation to use it with decent moderation for the public purposes which alone can justify its maintenance. It can exist only so long as it contributes to the permanence and security of free government, only so long as it is an instrument for the support of all civil liberty. And the responsibility for maintaining it in usefulness and purity, in beneficence and in power, rests upon journalism, which is at once its expression and its guardian.

In the preceding paragraph reference was made to "a possible reservation for acute emergencies." There are conceivable circumstances in which a temporary restraint upon the gross abuse of the freedom of the

press may be necessary for the security of society. This freedom, it has been stated, "is commanded and guaranteed by the American Constitution not as a measure for the protection of a private interest but as a measure for the protection of the people in the preservation of their liberties." This being the case if the abuse of this freedom seriously and imminently imperils the constitutional liberties of the people and the existence of a free government its restriction might be imperative. "The safeguarding and fructification of free and constitutional institutions," said Chief Justice Waite in a notable decision, "is the very basis and mainstay upon which the freedom of the press rests, and that freedom, therefore, does not and cannot be held to include the right virtually to destroy such institutions." We do not need to endorse the specific application of this assertion in approving it as fundamentally sound in itself. But it does not warrant a restraint upon free speech unless free and constitutional institutions are actually and immediately imperiled. It is of the essence of these institutions that they are subject to change in accord with the popular mandate and it is essential to such evolution that the constitution itself, as well as all government under it, be open to the fullest discussion and criticism, for it is only by such processes that political progress can be made and political rights maintained. And if change is to be permitted through condemnation of what is believed to be wrong, as a result of altering conditions or altering convictions, then it is necessary that the right of condemnation, to whatever extreme it may go in utterance, should be preserved.

"No errors of opinions can possibly be dangerous in a country where opinion is left free to grapple with them," says Simms, and this is true where time can be given for the operation of the processes by which error of opinion may be corrected. It is only when, in a time of national crisis, that these processes of correction can not be effectively exercised, and when dangerous opinions *are being translated into dangerous action,* subversive of free government and popular rights, that a limitation of this freedom may be conceivably justifiable. "We should be eternally vigilant against attempts to check the expression of opinion that we loathe and believe to be fraught with death," says Justice Holmes, "unless they so imminently threaten immediate interference with the lawful and pressing purposes of the law that an immediate check is required to save the country." That is the sole condition under which a limitation upon the right of the press to express opinion may be warranted, and that only to the extent necessary for the immediate purpose and no longer than to serve that purpose.

In relation to the freedom of the press journalism has two responsibilities laid upon it: First, to guard that right from any encroachment upon it that is not justified by an immediate, urgent and obvious peril to the free government and the civil liberties that it is its province to protect; and, second, to exercise that right wisely and sincerely for the public welfare.

CHAPTER XII

EDITORIAL POLICY

THERE rests, then, upon the editor or editorial directors the task of creating and sustaining a newspaper personality whose intellectual and ethical qualities command respect, and of fulfilling the obligation that rests upon the paper to serve the public interest to the best of its ability. He, or they, have, that is to say, two interests to serve, that of the paper and that of the public. There is no necessary conflict in this, for as a rule the best service to the paper is that which gives the best service to the public. The interest of the paper, however, comes first, inasmuch as material subsistence is the primary essential of all service. With every man, whatever his aspirations, whatever his ideals, bread must be provided for if he is to make any progress toward their attainment. The means of existence are necessary to the purposes of existence, and must be established both as a preliminary and a constant accompaniment to their accomplishment. Therefore it is essential that the editor labor to sustain and promote the material welfare of his paper, not only because his own material welfare is involved, but because it can contribute to the public service only upon the material foundations laid for itself. The building up of a great newspaper, the building up of any newspaper, that exer-

cises the proper and legitimate functions of journalism is in itself a public service, and the newspaper is entitled to all the honest rewards that may come from the exercise, and in the assertion that it must first consider its own interest there is no implication that it should in any measure sacrifice, or go contrary to, the public interest, for in all the rightful serving of the one there is necessarily the serving of the other.

In this construction it is essential that the newspaper have an editorial policy. It is not essential that it be expressed in definite terms, even to itself, but it is necessary that there be a consciousness of aims and ideals. It may be that the creator of a newspaper has no other purpose in view than the publication of a newspaper to supply the news to a certain field. He may, that is to say, have no specific object to be accomplished through and beyond the publication. He may have no thought of using it to advance the interests of any party, class or condition, or to promote any definite plans or principles of public conduct and action. None the less a conscious policy is necessary. For the mere publication of a newspaper, however limited its purposes and aspirations, involves public information, public observation, public criticism and public judgment that must result in a measure of public approval if it is to attain success, simply as a newspaper. And if that approval is to be obtained and maintained there must be in the product itself evidences of studied concern for its own character and efficiency. Unless thought has been given to these qualities the product will be worthless, and unless that thought is founded upon some understood and accepted

principles it is without guidance or aim, and therefore ineffective. One moved by the urge of journalistic creation decides that he is going to publish a newspaper. But coincident with that decision, if they have not preceded it, as usually they have, are the questions, what kind of a newspaper and what for? And whatever may be the answers to these questions they compel a conception of policies, of purposes and the means to their attainment. If the answer to the first is merely "a good newspaper," and to the second, "to publish the news," he is at once confronted with the problem of what constitutes a good newspaper and how it is to be made good, leading his consideration inevitably to the adoption of standards of some sort.

And once in operation the daily contacts of the newspaper with life and events, the response that it must make to the kaleidoscopic aspects of the news, the obligations that it necessarily assumes as a disseminator of current information and as an exponent of public opinion, demands not only a continuous application of these elemental standards but a continuous adjustment of policy in consonance with them to the varying events, conditions and issues of the procession of days. A newspaper policy can be fixed only as to fundamental principles. These determine its character, reveal its qualities, both as a purveyor of news and as an interpreter of events, and indicate in a general way its aims and ideals. Nor are these necessarily immovable. They may develop through growth and experience, or through a change in the spirit behind them, into something vastly finer and greater than the original conceptions, or they

may be allowed to deteriorate both in quality and activity, bringing in the latter case deterioration to the newspaper, unless they were originally too visionary for practical application. But aside from these principles that are the permanent guides of policy, the events of each day constantly raise up new questions requiring expression of editorial opinion by which its policy as to these questions is indicated.

Editorial policy, therefore, is a constant adjustment of opinion and the expression of opinion to more or less fixed principles of conduct and action, and to varying events and issues. Or, to put it another way, it is the application of relatively fixed principles of opinion to the protean aspects of life in its public manifestations. Its direction is not unlike the piloting of a boat upon a stream, where the landscape is constantly changing, and where there are shifting currents, stretches of comparatively still water, rapids at times, with sandbars, rocks and snags to be seen and evaded; but if the boat is staunch and the pilot alert the voyage is safe and continuously diverting. The pilot, however, has a double responsibility to make the voyage worth while for the owners of the vessel, and to guard the lives and the goods intrusted to him, that the journey be made secure and beneficial for all. He cannot follow his own whims; he cannot take unnecessary risks; he cannot play fast and loose with his employer's interests, or with his own interests if he is perchance the proprietor; he cannot ignore the rights nor imperil the security of his precious freight. His task and his duty are to steer the boat and carry the freight to port. It

is a task that involves constant watchfulness, a steady hand upon the wheel, with such a sense of obligation and responsibility that no self-interest opposed to its performance can divert him from the course.

So it is with newspaper policy. Given staunch principles of integrity and purpose, its direction is but a matter of steering with a steady hand and a watchful eye through the varying conditions and issues which the events of the day develop. But the dual responsibility of the helmsman cannot be forgotten. The material interests of the newspaper must be served if it is to carry on, while at the same time the interests of the people, material and spiritual, which are its precious freight, must be guarded and safely guided. He cannot imperil or sacrifice either, nor can he advance one at the loss of the other. Their interests are inseparable. To betray the public is to betray the newspaper. Loyalty both to press and people is essential to editorial guidance.

But, abandoning nautical symbolism and coming ashore, it is necessary that newspaper policy be, as Lincoln said of his legs, long enough to reach the ground. An editor cannot profitably or successfully soar above the heads of his readers. He may be in advance of them, but never out of touch with them. If he is to lead it must be along a road which they can follow, and leadership must be expressed in terms which they can understand. Moreover, the fiduciary relation which he bears to them must be exercised with a decent respect for their opinions, their emotions, their prejudices and passions, if he is to carry them with him. Journalism should be independent, but it cannot carry the inde-

pendence so far as to separate itself from the public it serves without loss of public support and consequent loss of opportunity to service. A fiduciary office, that is to say, cannot be exercised save in association with the objects of the trust it involves.

"This fiduciary relation," Dr. Talcott Williams[1] well says, "carries with it the obligation of service and the consciousness of a great public duty on the part of the journalist. It is never true of him, as is sometimes unkindly said, that, like the drum-major, he leads the procession along a predetermined route, from which he cannot vary, and that the apparently spontaneous twirl of his baton and surprising gyrations of his wand of office really follow a prescribed tune which is already written, as he walks before those who pipe and drum it, from the thundering bass of the great newspaper to the flageolet of the country weekly piping on its rural reed. But it is true that the instant the journalist turns into a side street and the procession leaves him and goes its own way, as has happened to many an independent journalist, he ceases to be a journalist and becomes that admirable but costly person, to himself and to his publisher, the pamphleteer, who pays the price of printing, careless whether men take it or leave it. A journalist cannot be careless at this point. If men leave his newspaper he may be publishing a most admirable history of the world for a day, freighted with the wisest opinion ever uttered, but the publication is not a newspaper. It is, instead, a book published daily by its author and creator at an extravagant cost, in a form which renders

[1] *The Newspaper Man.*

its preservation impossible, its present penally costly, and its future a safe oblivion."

The truth of that is not to be questioned. But, on the other hand, neither can the journalist sit with his ears open waiting for the *vox populi* before he dares to speak. It is one thing to be in general accord with the tendencies of opinion in that part of the public which a newspaper serves; it is quite another to be a mere echo of that opinion. The newspaper cannot be too far ahead of or oblivious to its public, nor can it sink to the level of a camp follower. In the nature of things, newspaper opinion must be formed and expressed in relation to questions as they arise, and the newspaper must constantly declare opinions, whether tentative or positive, before the public in general has time or opportunity to form opinions for itself. It may, it is true, comment without hazarding a direct expression of view until some signs of the trend of public reaction appear, but this is to withhold from the public the suggestions and guidance for which it so largely depends upon the press, and which it is the function of the press to supply. It is a cautiousness, not to say timidity, that is not compatible with the fundamentals of journalism. There are occasions, however, when information is too incomplete or too conflicting to permit an intelligent opinion to be formed, and its definite formation should wait upon better knowledge and clearer light. There are circumstances also when the scales of judgment are so nearly evenly balanced that it is difficult to decide upon what is right or what is best. Under such circumstances it is wisdom and not timidity that cautions careful

deliberation. The public has a right to the best judgment and the clearest definition of which the editor is capable, and, moreover, it is upon the character and quality of that judgment that public respect for a newspaper's opinion, and the consequent influence of its opinion, must be founded. "Hair-trigger" opinion or "half-baked" opinion is not good journalism under any circumstances.

But these exceptions to the utterance of opinion in advance of public expression are relatively of unusual occurrence, and they operate only to defer initial and independent judgment where such judgment is not at once practicable or proper. Ordinarily the editor must form his own opinions upon the events and questions coming before him for comment, without any other knowledge of the public attitude toward them, present or prospective, than that derived from his experience with the expression of public sentiment, and the acquaintance with its trends that constant association and study gives to him. He is, therefore, always, and must always be, a little in advance of public opinion if he is to fulfill this important function of journalism properly and influence the direction of public opinion. In this, of necessity, he constantly risks the possibility that the public will refuse to follow him, but this risk is not great if he has learned through experience, and the intuition growing out of experience, to estimate the public feeling and will in relation to any given question. However, there are often times when he must express opinions that he knows to be in opposition to public sentiment, and be prepared to battle for his convictions

of right against popular prejudice, passion or error until he has won or lost, if he is to justify his independence, his sincerity, if he is to fulfill his duty as a guide and protector of the public welfare. For the public is not infrequently misled by its own emotions and its own lack of knowledge, or misguided by influences that are consciously or unconsciously antagonistic to its real welfare, and must be urged into the right against its own convictions.

Therefore, while it is important that an editor should consider his readers—their intelligence, disposition and tastes and the nature of their customary attitude toward public questions; that he should endeavor generally to be in accord with them if he is to expect them to be in accord with him and to march with him along the road he follows—the fundamental conditions of his calling and his service demand that he precede them on the way; and he must trust to his knowledge of them, of their interests, their needs and their feelings to keep himself and his paper in touch with them and in sympathy with them, thereby maintaining their approval and support in his general policy even though he may often find it necessary to go contrary to their wishes and feelings in some details of it.

Indeed, if it were attempted it is not possible for the opinions of a newspaper to please all of the readers all of the time, or, for that matter, to please all of them any of the time, if its opinions have any force of character, and therefore any value, whatsoever. No expression of opinion that is definite and positive enough to have any weight can fail to be more or less distasteful

to some, however homogeneous and accordant the body of readers may be in general. It is as certain a rule in journalism as it is in individual life that to attempt to please everybody is to please nobody. On the other hand, the newspaper that tries to please nobody is usually successful in doing so. The safer course is to please oneself, within the limitations created by the necessity of public support and the obligations of public service. A newspaper's opinions, that is to say, should be of its own creation or acceptance, founded upon its own knowledge and study of facts, and agreeable with its own conceptions of right, if it is to respect itself and acquire the respect of the public. But in arriving at its judgment of right it has to remember that it is a newspaper, not a pamphlet, that in the expression of its views it occupies a fiduciary relation to its public, that the purpose of the expression is not to air one's opinions for the mere pleasure of the airing but to interest, inform and guide its readers in the right way.

That involves an essential independence of thought that is limited as to its expression by considerations of public feeling, public interests and public needs. Independence in the forming and expression of opinion is a fundamental quality of journalism. This has no reference to what is termed an "independent newspaper" in the political sense, for independence is not incompatible with the most intense partisanship. What is meant by it, in this connection, is the inalienable right to form and publish one's opinions in accordance with one's conception of right, whether that conception is right or wrong, whether it is partisan or unpartisan. There are

honest men who are so imbued with party spirit that they are unable to conceive of anything being right politically that does not bear the stamp of their party, and if that is their voluntary conviction they are not lacking in individual independence in its expression. But that type of journalism is passing with the passing of that type of men. There will always be partisans as long as there are parties, as long indeed as there are issues which cause sharp differences of opinion, for one may be intensely partisan in other fields than politics. But journalism, even that which is frankly partisan in the political sense, has become more or less discriminating in its judgment, more or less disposed to weigh men and measures on their individual merits. This tendency of journalism in general has caused the virtual disappearance of the all-inclusive and all-indorsing partisanship of the past, and the growth of a journalism that is expressed in "independent" newspapers, by which is meant, not neutrality, as some imagine, nor general opposition to parties and party purposes, but such a detachment from party allegiance as will permit the expression of independent views on all questions arising without regard to party interests. It does not inhibit the strongest kind of support to party aims or action if in the circumstances of a particular moment that support is believed to be justified, but judgment is based, in theory at least, upon the conception of the merits of the specific situation and not upon attachment to the party. In short, independent journalism in this restricted sense, claims the right and the duty to support what it believes to be right and to oppose what it be-

lieves to be wrong, in relation to every question or condition that arises affecting the public interest, untrammeled by party connection.

Naturally this trend is not favorable to party solidarity or unity, and parties being apparently necessary in a democratic government it raises the question of the responsibility of journalism in relation to parties and to public officials. Is independent journalism a better promotive of the public welfare than partisan journalism? The trend is itself an answer in the affirmative. For it is a development that is a result of a growing professional consciousness that the interests and rights of the people are its paramount concern, that party existence and power are justified only by its contribution to public welfare, and that parties, however meritorious, are but means to ends which they can accomplish only so long as they are in fact the agencies of the people, responsive to their will, and conducting the affairs of government honestly and efficiently in the interest of the people. This consciousness, therefore, while it may or may not lessen individual attachment to the party, demands a discriminating consideration of party positions and of party conduct as it is expressed through its representatives in office. The tendency of this development, that is to say, is to impel the examination of public questions and of public acts more and more upon their individual merits in relation to the public interest rather than exclusively in relation to party interest. Its influence, of course, is felt and manifested in varying degree but it has made even the most partisan papers less blindly partisan, so that the party

organ, the mere mouthpiece of party, has virtually vanished, while its call for independence of thought and expression has created innumerable newspapers that declare their entire independence of party control or party obligation.

This consciousness is a natural and inevitable accompaniment of the developing realization that journalism is a profession of public service, that if it is to serve effectively it must be founded upon truth, in its opinions as well as in its news, and that it is a betrayal of trust to deceive the people even for partisan ends. It is, therefore, an ethical and a political as well as a professional advance. And like all such advances it has had its prophets and its leaders, men who recognized the reasons, and the public necessity, for independence in journalism, long before the realization affected the mass of the profession. John Thaddeus Delane, of the London *Times,* was one of these. In 1852 Lord Derby and Lord Grey, incensed by Delane's criticisms of British governmental policy in its relation with Louis Napoleon both hotly denounced him, though they were of different parties. "If in these days," said Lord Derby, "the Press aspires to exercise the influence of statesmen, the Press should remember they are not free from the corresponding responsibilities of statesmen." To this Delane replied in an editorial in the *Times,* recognizing the responsibility of journalism but denying that it is "bound by the same limitations, the same duties, the same liabilities, as those of the Ministers of the Crown."

"The purposes and duties of the two Powers," he said, "are constantly separate, generally independent,

sometimes diametrically opposite. The dignity and freedom of the Press are trammeled from the moment it accepts an ancillary position. To perform its duties with entire independence, and consequently with the utmost public advantage, the Press can enter into no close or binding alliance with the statesmen of the day, nor can it surrender its permanent interests to the convenience of the ephemeral power of any Government. The first duty of the press is to obtain the earliest and most correct intelligence of the events of the time, and instantly by disclosing them to make them the common property of the nation. The Press lives by disclosures. Whatever passes into its keeping becomes a part of the knowledge and history of our times. It is daily and forever appealing to the enlightened force of public opinion—anticipating if possible the march of events—standing upon the breach between the present and the future, and extending its survey to the horizon of the world. The duty of the Press is to speak, of the statesman to be silent. We are bound to tell the truth as we find it, without fear of consequences—to lend no convenient shelter to acts of injustice and oppression, but to consign them at once to the judgment of the world. . . . It may suit the purposes of the statesman to veil the Statue of Liberty. . . . Governments must treat other Governments with external respect, however black their origin or foul their deeds; but happily the Press is under no such trammels, and, while diplomatists are exchanging courtesies, can unmask the mean heart that beats beneath a star, or point out the blood-stains on the hand which grasps a scepter. The duty

of the journalist is the same as that of the historian—to seek out the truth, above all things, and to present to his readers, not such things as statecraft would wish them to know, but the truth as near as he can obtain it. . . . Let those who will preach silence on crimes which they cannot deny and dare not even palliate; we have been trained in another school, and will not shirk from boldly declaring what we freely think, though it should be our disagreeable duty to tell Lord Derby that he condescends to be the tool of the party which he pretends to lead, and Lord Grey that he is the scourge of the party which he is permitted to govern." [1]

That is the spirit and these are the principles that in general should govern independent journalism, as much so now as they governed Delane so long ago. But in their exercise it should never be forgotten that the newspaper bears a responsibility of its own as great as that which rests upon the statesman. The public welfare is as much in the keeping of one estate as of the other, and though journalism is subject to no law that restrains its speech and is bound to its duty by no oath of office it is none the less under an obligation equally solemn to protect, conserve and promote the public welfare within the field of its influence to the best of its ability. Its declaration of independence and its constitutional right of free speech constitute no license to run amuck amid the public interests. It is its constant duty to watch the course of events in their relation to the welfare of the people, to consider and discuss the questions that concern or affect the interests

[1] Cook, *Delane of the Times.*

of the people, to point out error, to criticize vigorously unfaithful or incompetent public service, to expose violations of the public trust in any office however exalted, to condemn the wrong and support the right, and all of this upon the individual opinion as to what is wrong and what is right. It is not infallible, and can lay no claim to inerrancy. On the contrary, it is subject to the variations and the weaknesses of judgment that affect all of humanity. But it is nevertheless the source of the information on which virtually all public opinion is founded, to a very large degree it is the voice of public opinion, however varied that opinion may be, and the development and guidance of public opinion is its particular and recognized function.

It follows, therefore, that it is its duty to consider the effect upon public opinion, and therefore upon public welfare, of all that it says in its own person. It cannot, consistent with the performance of that duty, permit personal prejudices or antipathies to govern the expression of its opinions if they blind it to truth, to justice, or to fair and intelligent judgment. Law and order and the conduct of government being essential to the public welfare, adverse criticism of the agencies of government should be based upon fact, and on honest convictions of error or of wrong. The agencies of the law are entitled to the respect of journalism as of the people so long as they justify that respect, for it is only in the degree of the respect in which they are held that they can be effective in the public service. Indiscriminate and unjust attacks upon them tend to lower them in the public estimation and therefore to lower the

quality of the public service. It is of the utmost importance in the conduct of government that it have the support of public opinion in the largest degree possible, and that opinion should be founded upon the merits of governmental conduct, general and specific. Public opinion, in fact governs the character of government in a democracy, and that opinion promotes good government in the degree in which it is truly and correctly informed and its impressions fairly influenced for good. False and misleading information in regard to the persons or acts of government, and opinions which unjustly impugn motives or integrity, are, for that reason, to be deprecated, not only as influences inimical to the public welfare, but as unworthy of journalism when it is deliberate. The difficulty of ascertaining and identifying the truth under all circumstances has been fully discussed in this volume, and what is fair or unfair in the discussion of public men or measures depends so largely upon view and feeling that no comprehensive rule can be laid down by which either can be always distinguished. But one may venture to assert that the test of proper journalistic conduct in this relation—indeed, in all relations involving the expression of opinion—is sincere conviction based upon knowledge. The evidences of that sincerity and that knowledge are the evidences of character which justify and secure the respect and confidence of the public in the measure of their constant impress upon the public mind.

CHAPTER XIII

EDITORIAL CONSTRUCTION

And now let us turn from editorial policy in general to the editorial in particular, the instrument by which editorial policy is expressed. There is, to be sure, or ought to be, an editorial policy relating to the news, which involves the manner of collection, preparation and publication of the news, but the principles applying to this division of editorial policy have been discussed in the chapters devoted to that department. We are here considering editorial policy as it is revealed in the expression of opinion on the editorial page.

The editorial page, it has been said, is the seat of the mind and soul of the newspaper personality, and the editorial is the tongue which "expresses the thought of this personality and thereby reveals its character, its conscience and the measure of its intelligence." This conception of the place and function of the editorial gives to it a dignity and importance that must be regarded if the personality to be created and sustained is to merit and receive the respect for its qualities of mind and heart that must be the foundation of public support and the foundation of its influence upon public opinion and action. The thought of the living personality of an institution is to be expressed, and this

thought is not necessarily in exact accord with the thought of the individual within the institution that is formulating the expression, though undoubtedly the thought is much better expressed and more impressive in its sincerity if that accord exists. Indeed, it must exist to a large degree if the strongest impression of a sincere and vital personality within the newspaper is to be made. But none the less there is a difference between the relation of the newspaper to the public and the personal relation of the editor to the public. The editor as an individual is not different from other individuals, his public responsibilities as a man, separated from the exercise of his office, being no greater than the public responsibilities of other men. What he says or does in his personal relations are not usually matters of public concern. He may express his views among his acquaintances as freely, and perhaps with as little effect, as any other. But when he undertakes to express the thought of the newspaper personality he is giving voice to something larger than himself, something with great, conspicuous and definite responsibilities, which it is incumbent upon him to recognize and respect; and in the exercise of his office in relation to that personality it is often necessary to restrain, to modify or to expand what may be his individual views, or even, particularly if he is one of a group responsible for editorial direction, to express views with which he does not wholly agree as an individual.

For because of its public relation and responsibility a newspaper may not always properly say what an individual may say with impunity; it may be expedient,

purely as a matter of conserving the public welfare, to say only in guarded terms what the individual could express freely, or it may be its duty to declare with vigor what the individual would be reluctant to say at all. The point that it is desired to express here is that the newspaper personality must be regarded objectively as something that has distinct interests, duties, obligations, responsibilities, rights and privileges separate from, and generally superior to, those of the individual personalities which create and sustain it. Moreover, it has, or may have, a permanency that does not pertain to any individual within it at any time, it has perhaps an established reputation for distinguishing qualities of character that it is necessary or desirable to protect and maintain, however changing the individual forces behind it. All of which comes to this, that in editorial direction and guidance and in editorial writing, one has more to consider than one's individual opinions, and there is an obligation not merely to do the best work one can, but to respect the rights and perform the duty of the institution that one serves, and so to express thought for public consideration that an institutional personality may be maintained that is distinctive, consistent, and worthy of public regard and confidence.

The past of the newspaper is therefore to be regarded. For whatever position it may have in the mind and feeling of its readers is due to its past conduct. There may be at times sound reasons for a decided change of principles, policy and course, because it has failed to keep abreast of the day, because it is necessary to reverse a downward tendency, or because it is desirable by such

a change, it being considered consistent with right, to expand its field of usefulness. These, however, are matters of deliberate adjustment with a full consideration and understanding of the obligations and risks involved. They refer to possible crises in a newspaper's career that do not often confront it, if ever. Lacking the need for such changes it is to be assumed that its past is worthy of respect and its continuity something to be maintained, in so far as the personality it embodies is concerned. That is no impediment to its growth, expansion and progress. For it is true of newspapers as it is of men that they "may rise on stepping stones of their dead selves to better things," and the past of a good newspaper is an accumulation of assets upon which the present and the future should profit.

That being conceded, what are the essential principles of editorial construction for the maintenance and growth of such a newspaper personality, or the creation of such a personality if it is still in the stages of conception? First and foremost, the editorial being the expression of the thought of the newspaper it is necessary that it be a product of thought. It is an easy matter for a practiced editorial writer to fill an allotted space with words that look well and read well but which having little or no thought behind them convey little or no thought to the reader. If an editorial page has no readers to speak of, it is because its editorials "little meaning, little relevancy, bear"; because they fail to interest, to inform and to guide; because being written without thought they have no thought within them to impart. If an editorial page is not read it is the fault

of the editor, not of the readers. An editorial page is always read if it is worth reading. Not by everybody, to be sure. Nothing in a newspaper is ever read by everybody. But editorials worth reading will be read by many, if exceptionally worth while, by the great majority, and always such editorial readers constitute the most intelligent and therefore the most influential element of any community. In proportion to the number of such readers, the newspaper is able to impress its thought, its character, its personality, and therefore its direct influence, upon the field of its circulation. There is no privilege in journalism so great as the development of a constituency that gives attention to its words because it knows them true, because it knows them intelligent, because it knows them sincere, and therefore trusts them; and there is no asset so valuable as this. But such a constituency cannot be developed unless earnest, sincere and intelligent thought is given daily to editorial utterance.

And obviously such thought must be founded upon knowledge. Not the learning of the schools or the lore of the past, though much of that is foundationally necessary; but particularly knowledge of the day, of circumstances and conditions, of persons and peoples, of questions and needs, of the immediate present. Such knowledge can be acquired only by constant study and observation of events, of their causes and nature, their import and trend. The conscientious editor is of necessity an industrious reader. He draws his stock of information from many sources, and is not content with that which coincides with his own point of view or

predilection. He wants to get at the truth and he weighs and analyzes facts to that end. Nor can he be satisfied with the knowledge that pertains to affairs which are at the moment of pressing public interest or importance. Events or conditions that seem unworthy of notice to-day may develop great issues to-morrow. Whatever is going on in the world, and particularly in his field of activity, that affects or is likely to affect the public interest or welfare, is worthy of his attention though it may never justify his comment.

That is not to say that an editor should cram his head full of details. It is easily possible to store so much lumber in the mind that there is no room left for construction. The "walking encyclopedia" is often useful as a piece of office equipment but usually it is only valuable for reference purposes. All the editor needs to retain is the salient points of a subject, the impressions that enable him to recall the outlines of information. Details are generally accessible when the needs of discussion require them. Even then it is seldom desirable to load the mind with the minutiæ of information. When one is unable "to see the town for the houses," the objective view of the whole question, which is so essential to editorial judgment, is difficult to obtain. The great value of editorial opinion, judicially formed and expressed, lies in the fact that it is objective, that it is the result of observation of a thing from the outside, viewing it in more or less clear perspective, with all its visible parts revealing their relation to the whole, much as a passenger in an aeroplane looks down upon a city and sees it as a unit

while at the same time his eye picks out its topographical distinctions. An opinion based upon a single aspect of an event or a question, seen so closely as to prevent a view of the other aspects, of all sides of it, is bound to be biased by the narrowness of the perspective, and therefore misleading. It is not always possible to view a question in the objective clearly, because of defects of vision or because all the facts essential to such a view are not at hand, but none the less it is necessary to the best and soundest judgment, and the editor is, or should be, in a better position to obtain such a view than any other observer. Even though his purpose be partisan, in any sense, he cannot do his best unless he knows what he opposes as well as what he supports.

But the value of thought and knowledge is dependent very largely upon the form and manner of their expression. An editor can never afford to forget that he is talking not only to a great audience but to all sorts and conditions of people, men and women—and, it is to be hoped, youths—of varying degrees of culture and education. If the editorial page is read to the extent that is always to be desired, if it is to have the weight in its field that only wide reading can command, it is essential that the thought of the newspaper be expressed, so far as possible, in terms of common understanding within the limitations of good English that comprehends the vocabulary of the day. At the same time if the thought, and the personality behind the thought, are to be respected it is necessary that the thought be clothed in language that justifies respect for its own qualities of diction. That does not imply fine writing but good

writing, by which is meant writing that expresses thought clearly in words that ordinarily require no reference to the dictionary by the average reader. Writing that is over the heads of the common people may win the applause of the few and elevate the writer in his own esteem, but it does not promote that large interest in, and attachment to, the page that is the foundation of its influence.

It is always to be assumed that the reader has sufficient intelligence to understand clear statements in plain English. The editorial page cannot be adjusted to the intelligence of the moron or to the ignorance of the illiterate. But it is not always to be assumed that the reader, however intelligent, is fully informed as to any subject of editorial discussion unless it is one so fully covered in the news, or one that is in general so well known that there is no excuse for lack of information. If the possession of that knowledge or information is doubtful the subject of the editorial should be made as clear as the thought about it, if the reader is to understand the opinion. The editorial, that is to say, should under such circumstances convey sufficient information in itself to enlighten the reader as to the theme of discussion. Moreover, the statement of opinion without the reasons for the opinion is not desirable unless it can be presumed that the reasons are already well known. With the growth of education, and of interest in public affairs, both of which it is the task of journalism to promote, the people become less and less disposed to accept opinions ready made, and more and more inclined to resent dogmatic assertions that do not justify

themselves by logic. They want, or many of them do, the reasons for editorial opinion, and they are entitled to them. Editorial discussion that discloses the processes of reasoning by which conclusions are reached, as well as the conclusions themselves, is the most convincing form of expression, if the reasoning is good. And such discussion is not only a tribute to the intelligence of the reader but it is a proof of the intelligence of the newspaper and *prima facie* evidence that it does its own thinking, a reputation for which is much to be desired.

And that brings us to another essential of editorial expression, that it be honest. Honest opinion can only be founded upon truth, or at least upon a belief in the truth of its premises. Exact truth, of course, is always more or less difficult to determine, particularly so in relation to current events, and the estimate of what is true is often as much a matter of individual judgment as is the opinion regarding its meaning and import. It is, however, upon the editorial judgment of the truth, as well as upon its judgment in opinion, that the public largely depends for its conceptions of right. Honest editorial expression, therefore involves honest statement of fact, as it appears to the editor, as well as sincerity of the views based upon it. It may be wrong as to both, it can never be always right as to either, it can only hope to be right, and to convince its readers that it is right, most of the time. But honesty and sincerity, which in this connection are synonymous, are essential to that conviction, essential to the establishment and maintenance of the public confidence, and, it follows,

essential to the material as well as the spiritual welfare of the newspaper.

But still more is needed for that impression. It is just as desirable to win the heart of the reader as his mind. Intellectual respect is necessary to the highest regard, but that respect is not likely to be active nor dependably loyal, unless there is developed with it a degree of attachment that approaches, or reaches, a sentiment of affection. To that end newspaper editorials should be imbued with human feeling. That is not to say that the newspaper should ever be temperamentally emotional, but that it should always realize that the qualities of humanity are necessary to personality, and that these qualities are not to be fully expressed unless feeling as well as thought actuate them. The newspaper, in other words, must feel as well as think, must put feeling into its thought as well as reason, if it is to be regarded as a friend as well as a counselor. Feeling, to be sure, must be restrained by reason. It is always easier to feel than it is to think and there is nothing more dangerous to the public interest, or to the real interest of the newspaper, than feeling that is uncontrolled by thought. There is, indeed, much editorial, that is more the expression of emotion than of sense, and it would be unnecessary to speak of feeling, save to condemn its excesses, were it not that it is indispensable, when under control, to the earnest and vigorous utterance of deep conviction, and indispensable to the strongest impress upon the public mind and conscience. Opinion, under circumstances that arouse and justify feeling, may array argument with skill, but if

it rigidly suppresses feeling it lacks the vitality that strikes the answering spark in the reader. Being "icily regular" it is likely to be "splendidly null." Moreover, it is through feeling that the highest sentiments of humanity, in its ethical and altruistic relations, and its highest spiritual aspirations and ideals, are expressed, subject to the direction and guardianship of the mind. Newspaper personality, in short, must have a heart as well as an intellect, and be as unafraid to reveal the one as the other, if it is to be in accord with the humanity it represents and presents, if it is to be a fit and influential companion and mentor for mankind. There is no greater field of usefulness and of public service for journalism than the exercise of its power, when occasion warrants, to awaken the sentiments of the heart within the breast of the people and make them active for good works, and it cannot exercise that power effectively unless it has a heart of its own, a heart that ever responds to human suffering, human needs, and human aspirations toward the good—unless, in short, it has a soul, that encompasses and controls both heart and mind.

CHAPTER XIV

ETHICS OF JOURNALISM

THE newspaper of each day is more or less a record of events that involve ethics in one way or another. They present violations more often than observances of ethical rules and principles, because such violations are departures from the normal which arrest, and require, public attention. It is the abnormal, the unusual, that rouses interest and curiosity and that creates much of what is termed news; and, misanthropes to the contrary notwithstanding, violations of moral law and duty of sufficient magnitude to get into the newspapers are still, as they have always been since civilization came into existence, manifestations of the abnormal in human conduct. The great mass of the people rarely depart, in any degree sufficiently marked to attract public notice, from the standards of conduct laid down ages ago as the essentials of human relations in a civilized society. But the newspaper of each day may also contain observances of ethical principles so conspicuous or unusual as to constitute news, and record movements for the promotion of such principles that make themselves worthy of a place in the public news by their public acts.

The newspaper, that is to say, deals to a considerable extent with the phenomena of ethical violations, whether

negative or affirmative, and it is in itself, or should be, and usually is, a great influence for the advancement of ethical principles and conduct. Being in that degree an exponent of such principles it is peculiarly subject to them. It lives, and must live, in the open. Whatever it does, good or bad, is necessarily exposed to public view and criticism, for it is by public exposure of itself that it exists. The newspaper can have no private life. Living by disclosures it cannot conceal itself. Its motives, to be sure, may be construed one way or another, but its acts are each day in evidence before the bar of public opinion. Therefore its own ethical conduct is constantly involved by the diurnal creation of itself, and ethics becomes a matter of special importance to the practice of the profession, and no less to the business, of journalism.

Journalism, dealing as it does almost wholly with human relations and having constant and insistent obligations in connection with the exercise of its public office, its essential principles are largely, and necessarily, of an ethical nature. Throughout this entire volume ethical considerations predominate because they are inescapable, but it would seem to be desirable in bringing this discussion of journalistic principles to an end, to consider specific standards of ethics in the conduct of journalism.

It is quite probable that many a journalist having the direction of a newspaper in his hands and being responsible for its conduct, has gone to his grave after a successful and honorable career without ever a thought of ethics as such, or without ever formulating in his

own mind a single definite rule of ethics in relation to his work. Nevertheless it is just as probable that he conducted his newspaper with a due observance of ethical principles. Doubtless there have been millions of men who never heard of the Ten Commandments but who observed their rules as fully as those to whom they were well-known and divine commands. Every man, whether he is conscious of it or not, is influenced by some sort of moral standards. They may be high, they may be low, they may be broad or extremely restricted, they may dominate his acts at all times or only now and then, but in some way and to some extent their influence is expressed in conduct, even though he may not be aware of the existence of such standards as something definitely formulated. The influence of a moral standard, that is to say, once accepted as such and put into practice, is much broader and more pervasive than the knowledge of it. Ethical principles were in operation ages before ethics, or any similar definitive term was applied to them, and also before any moral standards were formed or adopted. But none the less it was necessary to establish such standards in order to have recognized measures of right by which men might be guided in their conduct to the observance of the right, or condemned either by law or by society for their failure to do so. And by their adoption and application among those who realized not only their essential rightness but their need as regulating agencies of human conduct, their influence was spread to those who realized none of this but who found it necessary to conform in some degree to their principles in order

to maintain a standing in the society controlled by them. No people have ever progressed morally who did not have conceptions of right impressed upon them by moral leadership, and these conceptions embodied in more or less definite rules for human guidance; and material progress, it is worth while to say, has never been long maintained that was not accompanied by moral progress. For the higher the state of material development the more complicated the state and the relations of society, and the greater the need for moral standards by which society may be guided in these relations.

As it is with people in general so it is with groups of people having a common interest. Each individual of such a group may have a conception of right which he puts into practice in his own way, or he may have no conception of right and conduct himself without regard to considerations of right. Having no recognized standards of right for the whole interest each is guided by the nature of his own personality. If his personal standards are high his conduct in relation to the common interest will be high. If his personal standards are low his conduct in that relation will be of the same order. There is nothing but the individual conception of right by which one may be guided, and there is no means of impressing the one having low ideas of right with the desirability or necessity of higher ones. But it is in accord with the customary manifestations of human nature that the application of low standards within a group has a more far-reaching effect upon its reputation than the application of the higher ones. The conduct of the majority of the mem-

bers may be irreproachable but the group as a whole must suffer from the reproach that the conduct of the minority brings upon it. Much of that conduct of the minority, however, is due not to deliberate preference, but to a lack of knowledge of better principles of action, or a lack of thought about principles. In the absence of any recognized standards of conduct one is apt to be governed by one's individual conceptions of right, or, having no such conceptions, or giving no thought to ethical distinctions, by one's desires propelled upon the level of one's personality. Not until the group establishes standards of conduct for the individual guidance of all of its members is there any definite measure by which the conduct of the individual may be judged in its relation to the whole, or whereby the thoughtless or the ignorant, as to such principles, may discover wherein he is lacking, and by the revelation of the sentiment of the majority of his fellows be supplied with an inducement to raise his own standards to conform with theirs. It is upon some such considerations as these that professional and other groups have found it necessary to establish codes of ethics, for the protection, the elevation and advancement of group interests, and no less the interest of each individual member of the group.

But in no instance has this ever been done until individuals had commenced to give thought to ethical principles, to formulate standards for their own guidance, and thereby to develop something concrete to attract the attention and thinking of others in the same field. Usually it is a slow development, and not until it is realized that there is a group interest that is dis-

tinct from and yet essential to the individual interest; that the group interest must be sustained and promoted as a means to the general and individual progress, does the question of moral standards become acute and impelling. In other words, it is first necessary to realize that all are members of one body, and upon that to establish a collective interest and purpose. If the common interest is to be advanced, common standards, as well as common aims, are essential means to advancement. If a group is to progress as a whole, morally or materially, it must first regard itself as a unit, and then move forward as such upon a definite course of progress.

Perhaps journalism has never been without representatives who gave serious thought to the ethical responsibilities of the press, and many an editor has given form and action to his thoughts in this direction by the creation of something in the nature of a code for the guidance of his individual newspaper. Long ago, for example, when George W. Childs published the Philadelphia *Public Ledger,* William V. McKean, its managing editor, adopted a system of editorial ethics for that paper which comprehended almost all the requirements of ethical conduct in journalism. It follows:

Always deal fairly and frankly with the public.

A newspaper to be trusted and respected must give trustworthy information and counsel. It is a serious thing to mislead the people.

Understate your case rather than overstate it.

Have a sure voucher for every statement, especially for censure.

There is a wide gap between accusation of crime and actual guilt.

Deal gently with weak and helpless offenders.

Before making up judgment take care to understand both sides, and remember there are at least two sides. If you attempt to decide you are bound to know both.

Do not say you know when you have only heard.

Never proceed on mere hearsay. Rumor is only an index to be followed by inquiry.

Take care to be right. Better be right than quickest with the "news," which is often false. It is bad to be late, but worse to be wrong.

Go to first hands and original sources for information; if you cannot, then get as near as you can.

It is the reporter's office to chronicle events, to collect facts; comments on the facts are reserved for the editor.

Let the facts and reasoning tell the story rather than rhetorical flourish.

Don't be too positive. Remember always it is possible that you may err.

All persons have equal rights in the court of conscience, as well as in courts of law.

Never add fuel to the fire of popular excitement.

There is nothing more demoralizing in public affairs than habitual disregard of the law.

Uphold the authorities in maintaining public order, rectify wrongs through the law. If the law is defective, better mend it than break it.

Nearly always there is law enough. It is the failure to enforce it that makes most mischief.

There is no need, and therefore no excuse, for mob law in American communities.

Numerous as bad men may be, remember they are but few compared with the millions of people.

The public welfare has higher claims than any party cry.

Grace and purity of style are always desirable, but never allow rhetoric to displace clear, direct, forcible expression.

Plain words are essential for unlearned people, and these are just as plain to the most accomplished.[1]

This contains no little sound common sense and no little admirable philosophy, as well as ethical principles that reveal a keen conception of right and justice in the mind of the creator of this private code. Similar in character and purpose, though it has more of the heart and less of the head in it than the foregoing, are the rules adopted by Warren G. Harding for the conduct of his newspaper:

Remember there are two sides to every question. Get them both.

Be truthful; get the facts.

Mistakes are inevitable, but strive for accuracy. I would rather have one story exactly right than a hundred half wrong.

Be decent, be fair, be generous.

Boost; don't knock.

There's good in everybody. Bring out the good in everybody, and never needlessly hurt the feelings of anybody.

In reporting a political gathering give the facts, tell the story as it is, not as you would like to have it. Treat all parties alike.

If there's any politics to be played, we will play it in our Editorial Columns.

Treat all religious matters reverently.

[1] *Payne's History of Journalism in the United States.*

If it can possibly be avoided never bring ignominy to an innocent man or child in telling of the misdeeds of a relative.

Don't wait to be asked, but do it without the asking, and, above all, be clean and never let a dirty word or suggestive story get into type.

I want this paper to be conducted so that it can go into any home without destroying the innocence of any child.

Another, and a very fine, personal expression of the ethical principles of journalism is found in "The Journalist's Creed," the creation of Walter Williams:

I believe in the profession of journalism.

I believe that the public journal is a public trust, that all connected with it are, to the full measure of their responsibility, trustees for the public; that acceptance of a lesser service than the public service is a betrayal of this trust.

I believe that clear thinking and clear statement, accuracy and fairness, are fundamental to good journalism.

I believe that a journalist should write only what he holds in his heart to be true.

I believe that suppression of the news, for any consideration other than the welfare of society, is indefensible.

I believe that no one should write as a journalist what he would not say as a gentleman; that bribery by one's own pocketbook is as much to be avoided as bribery by the pocketbook of another; that individual responsibility may not be escaped by pleading another's instructions or another's dividends.

I believe that advertising, news and editorial columns should alike serve the best interests of the readers; that

a single standard of helpful truth and cleanness should prevail for all; that the supreme test of good journalism is the measure of its public service.

I believe that the journalism which succeeds best—and best deserves success—fears God and honors man, is stoutly independent, unmoved by pride of opinion or greed of power, constructive, tolerant but never careless, self-controlled, patient, always respectful of its readers but always unafraid; is quickly indignant at injustice; is unswayed by the appeal of privilege or clamor of the mob; seeks to give every man a chance, and, as far as law and honest wage and recognition of human brotherhood can make it so, an equal chance; is profoundly patriotic while sincerely promoting international good will and cementing world-comradeship; is a journalism of humanity of and for to-day's world.

These examples are sufficient to show the ethical ideas and ideals of individual journalists. No one can say how many similar codes have been created for the private guidance of particular newspapers, but it is safe to assert that the majority of journalists who are responsible for newspaper direction and have given thought to the matter of ethical conduct in the practice of journalism consciously recognize some such principles as these and endeavor to apply them. And many, as has been said, apply them unconsciously because they are that sort of men and could not do otherwise.

But such statements of principles, being individual, and applied to the conduct of individual enterprise, have no influence upon the profession as a whole save as the effects of their application impress others. It is,

that is to say, the influence of example, which is limited in its impress to its contacts, and, moreover, it seldom reveals the specific principles which actuate it. Individual standards ever remain individual, and are always as varied as individual nature. Common standards recognized by all can only be established by collective consideration and action, resulting in a definite declaration of ethical principles for common observance, serving both as a guide to right and as a measure of right. Such a code, applying to the profession of journalism generally, is that adopted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1923. It is entitled *Canons of Journalism* [1] and it reads as follows:

The primary function of newspapers is to communicate to the human race what its members do, feel, and think. Journalism, therefore, demands of its practitioners the widest range of intelligence, of knowledge, and of experience, as well as natural and trained powers of observation and reasoning. To its opportunities as a chronicle are indissolubly linked its obligations as a teacher and interpreter.

To the end of finding some means of codifying sound practice and just aspirations of American journalism these canons are set forth:

I

Responsibility.—The right of a newspaper to attract and hold readers is restricted by nothing but considerations of public welfare. The use a newspaper makes of the

[1] These canons were formulated by H. J. Wright, editor of the New York *Globe* and Chairman of the Committee on Ethical Standards of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

share of public attention it gains serves to determine its sense of responsibility, which it shares with every member of its staff. A journalist who uses his power for any selfish or otherwise unworthy purpose is faithless to a high trust.

II

Freedom of the Press.—Freedom of the press is to be guarded as a vital right of mankind. It is the unquestionable right to discuss whatever is not explicitly forbidden by law, including the wisdom of any restrictive statute.

III

Independence.—Freedom from all obligations except that of fidelity to the public interest is vital.

1. Promotion of any private interest contrary to the general welfare, for whatever reason, is not compatible with honest journalism. So-called news communications from private sources should not be published without public notice of their source or else substantiation of their claims to value as news, both in form and substance.

2. Partisanship in editorial comment which knowingly departs from the truth does violence to the best spirit of American journalism; in the news columns it is subversive of a fundamental principle of the profession.

IV

Sincerity, Truthfulness, Accuracy.—Good faith with the reader is the foundation of all journalism worthy of the name.

1. By every consideration of good faith a newspaper is constrained to be truthful. It is not to be excused for

lack of thoroughness or accuracy within its control or failure to obtain command of these essential qualities.

2. Headlines should be fully warranted by the contents of the articles which they surmount.

V

Impartiality.—Sound practice makes clear distinction between news reports and expressions of opinion. News reports should be free from opinion or bias of any kind.

This rule does not apply to so-called special articles unmistakably devoted to advocacy or characterized by a signature authorizing the writer's own conclusions and interpretations.

VI

Fair Play.—A newspaper should not publish unofficial charges affecting reputation or moral character without opportunity given to the accused to be heard; right practice demands the giving of such opportunity in all cases of serious accusation outside judicial proceedings.

1. A newspaper should not invade private rights or feelings without sure warrant of public right as distinguished from public curiosity.

2. It is the privilege, as it is the duty, of a newspaper to make prompt and complete correction of its own serious mistakes of fact or opinion, whatever their origin.

VII

Decency.—A newspaper cannot escape conviction of insincerity if while professing high moral purpose it supplies incentives to base conduct, such as are to be found in

details of crime and vice, publication of which is not demonstrably for the general good. Lacking authority to enforce its canons, the journalism here represented can but express the hope that deliberate pandering to vicious instincts will encounter effective public disapproval or yield to the influence of a preponderant professional condemnation.

Here is epitomized most of the fundamental principles of journalism that have been discussed in the preceding pages of this volume and specific application is given to such of those principles as pertain directly to ethical conduct in the broadest sense. These canons constitute a standard of right for the practice of journalism generally, and they were given collective approval by a body of directing editors of newspapers of the largest circulation and influence. Therefore they may be assumed to express a consensus of professional opinion as to the nature of ethical principles applicable to journalism everywhere.

But in journalism as in all professions, as, indeed, in all life, it is one thing to declare principles and another thing to apply them; it is one thing to believe in principles and another to put belief into action. Formulas of right, save where they may be enforcible by penalties, can do no more than point to the right, can do no more than present standards for the guidance of all who are disposed to recognize them and who will endeavor to conform to them; and serve as a measure of the delinquencies of those who are not disposed to observe them. And every man must apply such standards according to his own interpretations of them and accord-

ing to the urge of his own consciousness in relation to them. Therefore, even among those who wish to do right, there are ever differences in the degree or character of observance. The minds and consciences of men cannot be standardized by any rules or laws.

None the less the development and definite statement of moral standards is essential to moral progress beyond the stage of individual effort in every field of human endeavor, for until principles of right are conceived and given form there can be no general understanding of what is right. But once formed, and once accepted as a general measure of right, they become by common consent an ever widening and growing influence in shaping and directing the trend of the mass.

The physical progress of journalism is one of the wonders of the modern world. That progress is something to be proud of. And it has not been accomplished without a degree of moral progress that is gratifying to the journalist who loves his profession. It is not difficult to find exceptions in this, as in all vocations, but generally speaking journalism has advanced, and is continually advancing, in its conceptions of right, in the character of its service, in the realization of its responsibilities and obligations, in the increasing emphasis it gives to truth, in the greater fairness of its discussion, and in its larger and profounder devotion to the public interest. And with this has been developing a professional consciousness that permits and promotes a broader outlook upon the field and sphere of journalism, with a desire to advance the standing and the welfare of the profession as a whole, with an

impulse to collective study of common problems and to common action for the general good. The *Canons of Journalism* is one of the fruits of this development, itself an impressive indication of the moral progress of journalism as a profession worthy to rank with the highest, and as a great and powerful agency for both the moral and material advancement of mankind, and an assurance of greater progress in the future.

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